

Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State

Evolving Identities,
Competing Loyalties, and
Shifting Boundaries

Hakan Özođlu

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SUNY series in Middle Eastern Studies
Shahrough Akhavi, editor

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State University of New York Press

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany

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For information, address State University of New York Press,
90 State Street, Suite 700, Albany, N.Y. 12207

Production by Diane Ganeles
Marketing by Michael Campochiaro

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Özoğlu, Hakan, 1964—

Kurdish notables and the Ottoman state : Evolving identities, competing loyalties, and shifting boundaries / Hakan Özoğlu.

p. cm. — (SUNY series in Middle Eastern studies)

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0-7914-5993-4 (alk. paper).

1. Kurds—History—19th century. 2. Kurds—History—20th century. 3. Kurds—Politics and government—19th century. 4. Kurds—Politics and government—20th century. I. Title. II. Series.

DR435.K87O96 2004

320.54'089'91597056—dc 21

2003045674

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Yurdanur and my children

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Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my teacher and friend Stephen Dale for his support, encouragement, and guidance throughout the long years of this research. I feel truly fortunate to know him and privileged to call him a friend.

This book would not have been written if I did not have at my disposal the guidance and expertise of friends and colleagues at the University of Chicago including John Woods, Robert Dankoff, Cornell Fleischer, John Perry, Heshmat Moayyad, and Bruce Craig. At different stages of this work, I also benefited from the knowledge of Victoria Holbrook, Jane Hathaway, Selim Deringil, and Reşat Kasaba.

I am also grateful to Yurdanur Serhat for introducing me to several Kurdish families through whom I collected much needed oral information about the previous generation of Kurds. Without her help, I would still be searching for the location of these people, let alone be able to convince them to sit down for an interview. With gratitude, I must also mention that the American Research Institute in Turkey partly funded this research. I am also indebted to Cambridge University Press and to Taylor-Francis Press (www.tandf.co.uk) for allowing me to utilize my previous articles in preparation of this book.

In closing, I would like to thank my wife and daughters for providing me with the emotional support that enabled me to cope with the vicissitudes of such a long commitment. Needless to say, I accept full responsibility for the shortcomings of this book.

Note on Transliteration and Translation

Transliteration into English of words that were originally spelled in Arabic script poses a special challenge. To provide uniformity, this study has tried to establish a consistent pattern in spelling Ottoman, Persian, and Arabic words. Except for terms common in English, regardless of origin, all words used in an Ottoman context are spelled according to Modern Turkish orthography. Therefore, all Turkish and Kurdish proper names are rendered in Modern Turkish forms (Mehmet, not Muhammad; Şerefhan, not Sharaf Khan; Ahmed-i Hani, not Ehmede Xani). For all non-Turkish/Ottoman names, this study has followed common scholarly spelling. In Arabic and Persian names, diacritics are omitted.

Common Ottoman and Islamic titles were spelled in English, such as shaykh, pasha, and sayyid. I preferred *paşa* to pasha if it was part of a name (such as Ekrem Cemilpaşa) or spelled as such in modern Turkish publications. A particular problem with this particular title arose when the same author's name was spelled as "pasha" in English language publications and *paşa* in Turkish; Şerif Pasha is the best example. Therefore, the reader will occasionally encounter different spellings for this word. For the rest, Turkish transliteration is used, such as *mutasarrıf* and *kaymakam*.

The Turkish system of alphabetization is also utilized for the place-names in Turkey, such as Diyarbakır. For places outside Turkey, the English spelling is preferred; e.g., Azerbaijan and Baghdad. All dates are according to the Gregorian calendar; however, in some instances Islamic dates are added to the text.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations to English are mine.

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Introduction

Entering the twenty-first century, the problem of Kurdish nationalism remains one of the most explosive and critical predicaments in the Middle East. With an estimated population of 20–25 million Kurds living mostly in Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, there is a little doubt that the Kurds constitute one of the largest ethnic groups in the world without a state of their own. In their efforts to establish their own state, Kurdish nationalist movements in the twentieth century were involved in many clashes with the governments of the states in which they resided. These confrontations claimed tens of thousands of lives, mainly those of civilians during the same period. In Turkey alone, the death toll for the most recent Kurdish uprising—that within the last decade and a half of the twentieth century—amounted to more than thirty thousand. At present, Kurdish nationalism is still regarded as a direct threat to the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned states by their respective governments; and the fear is not entirely unjustified. The Kurdish question is evidently transnational in the modern Middle East, but it is also international. Sizable Kurdish diaspora communities live and actively participate in nationalist politics in many European countries, most notably in Germany, France, and Norway. Hence, the nationalist aspirations of the Kurds are of keen interest to the greater international community.

Despite the pressing need to understand and explain the nature and origin of Kurdish nationalism, the subject regrettably remains poorly studied. There are several reasons for the lack of interest in studying Kurdish nationalism by mainstream scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies. The most visible one is political in nature. The politicization of Kurdish identity in the twentieth century is reflected in the polarization of the available scholarship, most of which has proven to be unreliable when subjected to vigorous academic scrutiny. Since Kurdish nationalism is regarded as a major threat to the territorial and political status quo in the Middle East, concerned states have discouraged scholars from directing their attention to the subject. In addition, because the access to primary sources has remained restricted and sporadic at best, scholars of the modern Middle East have turned their attention to more manageable topics with greater accessibility of source materials. With its international appeal, its

reachable reservoir of available information, and sufficient grants, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has emerged as the principal nationalist issue in the Middle East for the new generation of graduate students. The Palestinian issue has thus inescapably overshadowed Kurdish nationalism, becoming the de facto representative of the problem of Middle Eastern nationalism in the context of international politics.

In an ambitious attempt to free the study of Kurdish nationalism from its current marginal position and to bring it into mainstream scholarship in Middle Eastern Studies, this book examines the issue in the context of the Ottoman Empire. It focuses primarily on understanding the social, political, and historical forces behind the emergence and development of Kurdish nationalism in the Ottoman context out of which it was born. The Kurds became an indispensable part of this polyglot world empire in the sixteenth century, and after its breakup the majority of Kurds remained within the borders of its successor state, the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, interactions between the Ottoman state and the Kurds helped shape the political future of modern Turkey. Despite their significance, however, works on the Kurds also remain unjustifiably at the periphery of Turkish Studies, depriving the field of a major component of its subject matter. No doubt, Kurds are also an important part of the history of the Republic of Turkey. In any case, to understand the link between the Ottoman and the Republican periods, it is useful to look, albeit we can only do so very briefly, at the significance of the Kurdish issue in the emergence of the Republic of Turkey.

The Role of Kurdish Nationalism in the Emergence of the Turkish Republic

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, concerns about the status of Kurdistan escalated and played a major role in the establishment of the emerging Turkish national state. For example, the Kurdish issue directly affected the drawing of Turkey's southeastern border. The Kemalists, in an attempt to draw their national boundaries, were not as tolerant of the idea of a separate Kurdistan as they were of the idea of separate Arab nations in Iraq and Syria. They were determined to keep Anatolia intact as the homeland of the new Turkish State. The idea of giving regional autonomy to Kurds might have been entertained, but to maintain the territorial integrity of the new state, secessionist Kurdish nationalism was never allowed.

Although the Misak-ı Milli (The National Pact), which determined the present boundaries of modern Turkey, was first ratified by the Ottoman Parliament, it was in fact the work of Mustafa Kemal and his friends, who, in the end, thought that the inclusion of Syria and Iraq in Turkey would be impossible to enforce.¹ However, the province of Mosul, with its large Kurdish population,

was included in the national boundaries stipulated by the Misak-ı Milli. Such a decision indicates, at least partly, that Kemalists made a distinction between the Arab and Kurdish populated territories of Iraq and relied on Kurds to side with them. The Kemalists' reluctance to allow the secession of the Kurds is further evident in the early Republican records. Prior to the opening of the Grand National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi) on 23 April 1920, during the Erzurum and Sivas Congresses, a committee (namely the Heyeti Temsiliye or Counsel of Representatives) was established by the nationalists to investigate the issues facing a potential nationalist movement. Kurdish demands for the establishment of Kurdistan were briefly discussed, and the council concluded that even an autonomous Kurdish region would be dangerous for the future of the Turkish nationalist movement.²

However, ideas of a separate Kurdish state were circulating rapidly among the Kurdish leaders outside Anatolia. In Anatolia, several Kurdish revolts in the early Republican period made the Kemalists even more suspicious of the political loyalties of the Kurds. Although many local Kurdish tribal leaders, seeing the Kemalists as soldiers of Islam, supported the Anatolian resistance movement, there was substantial opposition to them as well. This Kurdish opposition, which constituted the backbone of early Kurdish nationalist leadership, sought alliances with the British and the Greeks, the sworn enemies of the Kemalist movement. Some Kurds in Istanbul, for example, were trying to establish a Kurdish state with the aid of British protection. Consequently, hard-line Turkish nationalists felt justified in their belief that Kurds were never to be trusted and that Kurdish nationalist aspirations had to be monitored carefully. The Republican period began with mistrust and suspicion of the Kurds and a well-founded fear of losing some of the remaining Ottoman territories, notably eastern Anatolia. As for the Kurds, an unfortunate period was about to begin, a period in which their political loyalties were always doubted. In the minds of some Turkish nationalists, any manifestation of Kurdish identity was and is a major threat to the indivisibility of the Republic of Turkey.

As indicated above, this book will discuss the development of Kurdish identity and its culmination to Kurdish nationalism; however, before discussing Kurdish nationalism, it is imperative to briefly review the scholarship on nationalism and to provide a working definition for the term. This will allow the reader to situate the present study within the theoretical spectrum of nationalism.

A Brief Discussion of Nationalism

Nationalism has proven to be one of the most persistent and consequential political ideologies of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. A voluminous literature has been produced on the subject, yet scholars most often

take its meaning for granted. No doubt, the term provokes different meanings in different people's minds. Nationalism, like most social terms, proves to be very problematic. To date, there is no consensus among scholars as to what constitutes a nation and what defines nationalism. Hence, serious scholars—although amazed at the effects of nationalism on the human imagination—are challenged by the ambiguous nature of it.

It should be noted that shifting definitions of the term are also among the greatest assets of nationalism. This inadvertent flexibility provides nationalism with ideological compatibility. The term's variant meanings make nationalism seem to be compatible with even contradicting ideologies such as socialism, religion, secessionism, imperialism, anticolonialism, and fascism. Such a high degree of adaptability, unfortunately, does not allow a universal definition that both provides a scholarly ground for comparison and, at the same time, complies with indigenous variations.

Let us first look at selective works on nationalism and see how various thinkers have conceived of the term.

Different Interpretations of Nationalism

It is fair to say that students of nationalism can largely be distinguished by their adherence to two main schools of thought: the primordialist/essentialist and the constructionist. The primordialists or essentialists see nationalism as a pre-modern and persistent phenomenon. Nations, they believe, have existed since some distant point in history. Yet when they originated is not clear. Believing in the "essence" of a nation, the primordialists argue that humankind is "naturally" divided into distinct communities of history and culture called nations and that each nation is unique in its own nature. Nationalities, the chief agents of nationalism, distinguish themselves from one another by possessing certain objective characteristics such as common descent, shared culture, language, religion, and territory. This line of thinking finds its most ardent followers among romantic nationalists. Among the early-modern scholars, German idealists such as Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) and Johann G. Fichte (1762–1814) can be considered the early proponents of romantic nationalism. In his *Addresses to the German Nation*, Fichte preaches the unification of Germany, claiming it constitutes a distinct whole.³

Similarly, Herder also believed in the "national soul" of Germany. Herder stated (as paraphrased by Carleton H. Hayes) that:

An aggregate of human beings is first differentiated from another by peculiarities of geography and climate; then it develops distinctive historical traditions—an appropriate language, literature, education, manners, and customs; thereby it becomes a full-fledged nationality

possessed of a “folk-character,” a kind of “national soul,” and a truly national culture.⁴

Herder was an ardent believer in the essence of the German nation, and, his ideas constitute a good example of the early essentialist school. Nationalist views are more forcefully stated in the writings of Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–72), an Italian nationalist and political activist:

The nation is the God-appointed instrument for the welfare of the human race, and in this alone its moral essence lies. . . . Fatherlands are but workshops of humanity, [and] nationalism is what God had prescribed to each people in the work of humanity.⁵

Recent academic studies present more sophisticated arguments on the issue of a national essence. These studies argue that nations existed before the emergence of modern nationalism. Anthony D. Smith, a sociologist, proposes a variant of the primordialist argument and points out the continuity of nationalism through its agent *ethnie*. Smith claims that *ethnie* does not carry ethnic or racial connotations; it refers only to such dimensions as a common myth of descent, a shared history, a collective name, and a distinctive shared culture. Hence, nationalists are in fact “political archaeologists” trying to construct a nation by rediscovering and reinterpreting the past in order to reconstitute the community as a modern nation. Smith claims:

[The task of nationalists] is indeed selective—they forget as well as remember the past—but to succeed in their task they must meet certain criteria. Their interpretations must be consonant not only with the ideological demands of nationalism, but also scientific evidence, popular resonance and patterning of particular ethnohistories.⁶

Smith does not see the modern nation existing throughout history, yet he believes that the major ingredients, which paved the way to modern nationalisms, were present in history. In other words, perhaps not the whole essence of nation was present, but essential traits existed. Hence, the task of nationalists is nothing but to assemble these fragmentary essences into modern nations. Although Smith acknowledges the process of modernization and its role in the emergence of nationalism, placing him into this category is unavoidable, for he finds the origins of nations in the *ethnie*, a real entity embedded in history.

Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny, two prominent students of nationalism, see the influence of John Armstrong’s study *Nations before Nationalism*⁷ on Smith. In his macrohistorical study, Armstrong argues that nationalities pre-date nationalism.⁸ He does not deny that national identities are created, but

does argue that they existed before nationalism. It is this very point that also constitutes the core of Miroslav Hroch's categorization of nationalism. In his well-known theory, Hroch suggests three phases for nationalism to emerge. In "Phase A," a preexisting community comes to embrace its cultural and linguistic heritage. In "Phase B," a nationalist leadership emerges to set the stage for a nationalist struggle; and in "Phase C," mass support for the movement is created. This sophisticated theory has merit in understanding and explaining the development of nationalism, albeit it is not uncontroversial. The first phase is the one that interests us directly, for it assumes the existence of a community before nationalism. It is also this assumption that allows us to place Hroch's approach to nationalism in the essentialist rather than in the constructionist school.

On the other end of the intellectual spectrum from the essentialists are the constructionists who believe nationalism is a construction of recent developments in human history and indeed predates nationalities, not the other way around.⁹ They argue that, such essentialist claims of nationalism are completely ahistorical, for the connection with the past is only an invention. This group can further be divided into two subgroups: (1) materialists, who suggest that nationalism and nations were created as a result of the need for capitalism's growth; and (2) culturalists, who emphasize the nonmaterialist constructions of nationalism.

The common point among the materialists is that they see nationalism as a product of industrialization. Ernest Gellner argues, for example, that nationalism is a characteristic of an industrial society and owes its existence mostly to forces of economy, political power, and bureaucratic government. According to Eric Hobsbawm, nationalism is something invented by the state to keep up with the needs of capitalism. Hobsbawm further maintains that political systems are moving into the "post-national" era, which is dictated by globalizing forces of transnational division of labor.¹⁰

One of the earliest proponents of the culturalist school, Ernest Renan, a nineteenth-century French scholar, takes into account cultural and social dimensions of nationalism. Renan, in his well-known lecture "What is a Nation," argues against essentialist claims of nationalism. According to him, common language, shared territory, religion, and so on, remain inadequate to define a nation. A nation, maintains Renan, is "a soul, a spiritual principle," the outcome of the profound complications of history.¹¹ The collective act of forgetting the past, according to Renan, is fundamental to the creation of nations. In effect, Renan paved the way to seeing nations as creations of human needs rather than as simply fixed entities.

It is this very point that later culturalists, such as Benedict Anderson, the key figure in the intellectual shift from the materialist to the cultural constructionist school of nationalism, picked up and developed into a comprehensive

theory. In his book *Imagined Communities*, Anderson suggests that nations are neither natural nor eternal, but modern constructions. Since the members of even the smallest nations cannot have face-to-face contact with all their fellow citizens, the feelings of group solidarity on a national scale has to be a projection in which people nurture the image of communion. Therefore, a nation, Anderson maintains, is an “imagined community.” Since a nation is imagined based on the changing needs of the present, no clear-cut definition of nationalism can be offered, nor can any objective social boundaries be drawn to those communities that regard themselves as “nations.”

It is important to note that capitalism, and specifically “print capitalism,” has a central place in Anderson’s theory. However, moving far beyond any simple reduction of nationalism to the needs of modernization, Anderson refuses to see nationalism as mere fabrication, and hence as “unreal.” He argues that “imagined” does not necessarily mean “unreal.” On the contrary, once “imagined”, nations and nationalism become real. This is the critical distinction between materialist and culturalist approaches.

The present book fits better into the context provided by the cultural constructionists, but further contends that the concept of ethnicity is deeply embedded in nationalism. Therefore, the crucial relationship between the ethnicity and nationalism must be addressed.

Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Development of Identity

The term “ethnic” comes from the Greek word *ethnos*, which originally meant heathen or pagan. After the mid-nineteenth century the word gradually came to refer to racial characteristics.¹² As Thomas Eriksen, a Norwegian anthropologist, suggests, “Since the 1960s, ethnic groups and ethnicity have become household words in Anglophone social anthropology, although . . . few of those who use the terms bothered to define them. . . . [E]thnicity has something to do with the *classification of people and group relations* [emphasis in the original].”¹³ Ethnicity classifies human groups on the basis of kinship. Hence, one can suggest that ethnicity seems to be the largest kinship group (real or fictive) after tribe and confederacy.

In an attempt to define ethnicity, Dru C. Gladney suggests a synthesis between primordial-based and interest-based ethnic identities and maintains that the answer “must involve a combination or dialectical interaction of the two aspects of ethnicity.”¹⁴ In another study, Gladney employs the term “dialogic” (as opposed to “dialectic”) suggesting that “cultural identity and ethnogenesis in the modern nation-state are a process of dialogical interaction between self-perceived notions of identity and sociopolitical context, often defined by the state.”¹⁵ Gladney further asserts that some ethnic identities are formed and

reformed based on the interaction between an ethnic group and a state as the controlling power. Pointing out the oppositional nature of thesis and antithesis, Gladney proposes that “dialogic” is a better term to define the interaction between the “self” (or a group) and the “other.”

The point is well taken; nevertheless, one should employ it cautiously, for the term “dialogic,” obviously a derivative of dialogue, invokes a sense of voluntary communication between the parties involved. This cannot be indiscriminately accepted as always occurring in the process of identity formation. In certain cases and stages of identity formation, the interaction is neither dialectic nor dialogic but “monologic,”—that is, the identity is imposed on a group by the “other” unidirectionally. Gladney very convincingly demonstrates that often the state embodies the “other” and interacts with the groups in configuring their identity; however, he seems to regard this interaction as voluntary by calling it dialogic.¹⁶ The present book contends that in the long process of identity formation and the creation of “ethnic” identity, groups go through dialectical, dialogical, and monological stages. There are periods in this process when identity is imposed on a particular group and hence can be called “monological.” These stages do not necessarily follow an order or are clearly distinguishable. On the contrary, they most often overlap. Nevertheless, it seems that at its earliest stage, we see the indications of monological process.

The monological process suggests that the role of the “other” is greater in the process of “imagining” a group than that of the group itself. At this stage, it is essential to state, the outsider imagines a group not only as “other” to itself, but also as “homogenous,” thereby often ignoring the fragmentation within this imagined society. In turn, a very heterogeneous group inherits the idea of being a unified and distinct social entity and begins to shape and reshape its own identity. Up to this point we have looked at the process of ethnicity formation, now let us address the issue of interrelation between ethnicity and nationalism.

Some scholars argue that nationalism and ethnicity can coexist but are not related. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, ignores the tie between the two, arguing that nationalism and ethnicity are distinct and “noncomparable” entities.¹⁷ Ethnicity might be present in nationalism, but there does not exist an obligatory relationship between the two concepts. A contrasting view is that of Walker Connor, who is credited with the term “ethnonationalism.” In his book *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Connor utilizes the two terms, nationalism and ethnonationalism, as virtual synonyms, stating that “nation connotes a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related. . . . [Therefore] ethnonationalism has an inner redundancy.”¹⁸ Nevertheless, his invention of the term “ethnonationalism” warrants that other forms of nationalism have a legitimate intellectual base.

Other scholars more forthcomingly acknowledge the existence of both ethnic and nonethnic elements in the nation, albeit not together. They divide nation-

alism into two types: that which is ethnic-based and that which is civic-based or citizenship-based. In an earlier work Hans Kohn acknowledges the existence of the two lines of thinking. Dividing nationalism into two groups, “eastern” and “western,” Kohn claims that compared to “organic” eastern nationalisms, western nationalism appears to be “civic.” Western or civic nationalism, according to Kohn, is rational and based on citizenship, whereas eastern nationalism is stagnant and based mainly upon kinship (whether real or fictive).¹⁹ Hence, Kohn believes that ethnicity represents only one kind of nationalism. This view can be criticized based on its conclusion that the “East” and the “West” constitute distinct entities, a position that has been challenged in many contexts in recent scholarship.²⁰ Furthermore, the proponents of citizenship-based nationalism have failed to distinguish it from patriotism, a sentiment that is loosely defined as a citizen’s loyalty to a state—not necessarily the nation-state.

Ernest Gellner comes to the same conclusion as Eric Hobsbawm. Gellner rejects the idea of the ethnic requirement in nationalism, maintaining that, like nations, ethnicity can be invented. Hence, nationalism invents nations. This view clearly contradicts with that of Anthony Smith, who sees *ethnie*, another variation of ethnicity, as a prerequisite for nationalism to emerge. To Smith, as we have seen, nationalities predate nations. Among these different and irresolute approaches to nationalism, it is mandatory to carefully state the position of the present book. The present book takes an eclectic position and subscribes to several of different points of view put forward by these thinkers.

First of all, this study proposes that ethnicity must be present for nationalism to emerge. In this sense, it agrees partly with Smith’s and Connor’s position. However, it differs from the essentialist school in that it questions the uncreatedness of ethnicity; and it seems that it, too, can be produced. The present book also suggests that nationalism is the political movement of an ethnic group that coheres based upon common language, religion, kinship and territory. A movement becomes nationalist in character only when a group of people, who *believe* that they constitute a separate *ethnic entity*, are politically organized and struggle for a nation-state, or at least autonomy in a “historical homeland.” In current scholarship, scholars attempt to reconfigure the term by introducing “civic” or “religious” nationalisms, and hence contribute to the inflation of definitions. This study, however, proposes that different forms of group solidarity should not be confused with nationalism. Labeling every political group as a nation contributes greatly to the confusion revolving around the definition of nationalism and nation-state. A distinction exists between state and nation; the latter requires ethnicity to cohere, however “imagined” or “constructed” it may be. Walker Connor confirms this point, stating that

The interrelationship between national identity and the identity which flows from citizenship in a state merits closer scrutiny since . . . the

two are often confused. Loyalty to the state and its institutions [should be] properly termed patriotism. . . .²¹

In ethnic nationalism, membership in a nation comes with the belief that members are territorially and ancestrally related, yet individual loyalty to a state brings only patriotism, not nationalism. This is not to deny that the majority of so-called nation states are ethnically heterogeneous. Nevertheless, it is not what a nation is but what people perceive it to be that creates national group solidarity. Hence, nationalism emerges when the members of a given group believe in their ethnic distinctness and act upon it to try to bring about independence or autonomy.

Also crucial in the process of identity/ethnicity formation is the *territory*. This book will argue that in order to manifest itself properly, nationalism requires a territory with which the members identify themselves. Ethnic groups identify themselves not only with a common language, past, and kinship, but—perhaps most importantly of all—with a territory. Territoriality is also critical in nationalist rhetoric, for the majority of nationalist movements strive for a territory in which members of a society can determine their political future. Territory has always been mentioned as a main component of group identity, but, its significance in the context of nationalism has rarely been demonstrated. Presently, an increasing number of scholars in Middle Eastern Studies concern themselves with the question of territory and its role in shaping group identity.²² As will be seen in this book, territory provides Kurdish identity and nationalism with an essential element without which nationalists fail to properly legitimize their claims.

Nationalism in the Kurdish Case

The definition of Kurdish nationalism is not immune to the confusion stemming from the vague nature of the term “nationalism.” Like other nationalisms, Kurdish nationalism is extremely difficult to define, since in people’s minds, it registers different meanings. However, as hard as it is to offer a satisfactory definition of Kurdish nationalism, this book is obliged at least to offer a working definition. It will be this: “Kurdish nationalism” refers to an intellectual and political movement that is based mainly (though not entirely) upon two premises—the belief in a consistent Kurdish identity, which is rooted in ancient history; and the conviction of an unalienable right for self-determination in a historic Kurdish homeland or territory.

Just one should be careful in defining Kurdish nationalism, one should be cautious in identifying Kurdish nationalists. The present work qualifies Kurdish leaders as nationalists based mainly upon their *active* involvement in the propagation of Kurdish identity and self-determination. In other words, Kurd-

ish nationalists are those who nurture the idea of an ethnically based unity and of a historical homeland, and who actively participate in Kurdish political movements. They do not necessarily strive for secession and are not necessarily anti-state. Clearly, not all Kurdish nationalists in the late Ottoman period were in favor of an independent Kurdistan.

Historically, most nationalist leaders belonged to the notable class, a class that was instrumental in the emergence and development of nationalist movements. Since this work will address the role of notables in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, it is essential to understand who these notables were and the role they played in other Middle Eastern nationalist movements.

Nationalism and Notables in the Ottoman Empire

It is a well-known fact that particularly after the eighteenth century the notable families of the Ottoman Empire became politically very active in determining the future of their regions. In earlier centuries local notables or *ayan* enjoyed only a limited power in the central and provincial administrations. The *ayan* became a significant political force particularly during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768–74 when the Ottoman state requested their service. “The Porte resorted [to *ayan*] in order to raise funds and recruits for the army; and in due course they were accorded official recognition as the chosen representatives of people vis-à-vis the government.”²³ In return, the notables were recognized and put in the payroll (*ayaniyye*) of provincial governments. In 1779, the right of appointing notables to the local *ayan* chamber was transferred from the provincial governor (*vali*) to the grand vizier because of allegations that the former had abused this right. Early in the nineteenth century, local notables seemed highly autonomous, “often defying the Porte for long periods and managing districts over which they had extended their control in virtual independence, although often providing contingents for the Ottoman army in time of war.”²⁴ In 1808 the notables pressured the sultan for a formal recognition of their rights and prerogatives. They became stipulated in a document known as the *Sened-i İttifak* (Deed of Alliance). Some Turkish scholars regarded this document as the Magna Carta of the Ottoman Empire,²⁵ giving the *ayan* in the empire a distinct social and political status. Other scholars have challenged the accuracy of this comparison, claiming that the resemblance was only in the form.²⁶ In any case, the grand vizier Alemdar Pasha was appointed by Sultan Mahmud II to undertake this task. Accordingly, on 7 October 1808, Alemdar summoned the *ayan* of Rumelia and Anatolia to Çağlayan Köşkü in Kağıthane, Istanbul and discussed the specifics of the agreement with the local notables. How many of the *ayan* responded to the invitation and came to Istanbul is not known, but the document was signed by four who seemingly represented the rest.²⁷ This agreement is important, for it documents the official

recognition of the *ayan* as a political power in the Ottoman administrative structure. It furthermore indicates that in the first decade of the nineteenth century the *ayan* were powerful enough to negotiate with the state and to assert their influence in the government, albeit on a very limited scale. We do not know how long this arrangement lasted, but in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, the *ayan*, perhaps unofficially, possessed at least some degree of political power.

The composition of notables differed from region to region. In the Arab provinces, the *ayan* were described as urban intermediaries between the government and the people. This group included the ulema (representing the religious class), local military leaders, and the traditional tribal leaders.²⁸ In the Kurdish provinces, notables came from among the Sufis, especially the Naqshbandis, from the Kurdish tribal nobility, and also from families whose leaders managed to secure local administrative positions. In some cases these categories overlapped. These groups took the lead in interpreting nationalism for the communities they represented and became nationalist leaders.

The interrelation between nationalism and notables and the origin of specific forms of nationalism are two issues with utmost significance for the Middle East; and the subject has been addressed in many different contexts. Studies on the role of notables in Arab nationalism provide us with a valuable comparative case. Therefore, to place the Kurds in a larger context, one should begin with looking briefly into the interrelation between nationalism and Arab notables.²⁹ In the case of Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, there exist several studies that document the political power of notables. Philip Khoury discusses the role of notable families in Damascus in the emergence of nationalism. Khoury claims that great notable families in Damascus, such as the Azm, played a significant role in the emergence and development of nationalist movements in Syria. Acknowledging the contributions of Islamic modernists and Christian secularists to the growth of Arabism, Khoury claims that it was the notables (particularly the absentee landowning class)—who attended Ottoman professional schools, served the state as civil servants, or served in the army—who translated the idea of Arabism into a protonationalist movements before World War I.³⁰ Not surprisingly, Khoury sees the “loss of privileged position in the Ottoman state” as the main motivation for the emergence of notables as nationalist leaders.

Another example that demonstrates the role of notables in the emergence of Arab nationalism comes from the Hijaz. The famous Arab revolt of 1916 that ended Ottoman sovereignty in most Arab lands was led by Hussein (the sharif of Mecca) and his two sons, Faysal and Abdallah. It was not a coincidence that the leaders of the revolt belonged to the Hashimite dynasty, which claimed direct descent from the Prophet Muhammad, a claim that gave them great legitimacy. This revolt soon spread outside the Hijaz and has been regarded as one of the cornerstones of Arab nationalism. Most historians agree that Arab nationalism was spawned in the Fertile Crescent among the urban notables who had

lost their privileges due to the centralization policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Ernest Dawn has demonstrated convincingly that Hussein was motivated by his disagreement with the ruling Committee of Union and Progress, which aimed at removing the sharif of Mecca from power. Instigated by the British, Sharif Hussein and his sons were looking for ways to consolidate their local power and eliminate the CUP's threat to their traditional authority over Arab society.³² Nationalism, then, provided Arab notables with an ideology that help them articulate their dissatisfaction with central government. With their personal charisma and the ability to mobilize large groups, notables assumed leadership in the emergence of Arab nationalism.

Just as scholars debate the importance of the notables in the emergence of nationalism, they debate the timeframe of the origin of Arab nationalism. In recent scholarship there seems to be a consensus that Arab nationalism is a more recent phenomenon than previously thought.³³ Rashid Khalidi, a student of Arab nationalism, observes that “the term ‘Arabism,’ implying proto-nationalism rather than full-fledged nationalism with concomitant desire for separation of the Arabs from the Ottoman Empire, is now accepted as more appropriate to describe the pre-war movement.”³⁴ Ernest Dawn pushes the time frame towards the end of the First World War, claiming that most Arabs remained Ottomanist until 1918 and that separatist anti-Ottoman movements remained insignificant until this time.³⁵ William Cleveland expresses similar views, stating that “the majority of the Arab elite sought survival within the framework of a strengthened Ottoman state, not in separation from it.”³⁶ In contrast to earlier scholars, most historians now prefer to make a vital distinction between Arabism and Arab nationalism. Defining nationalism as a majority movement aiming at separation from the Ottoman state, students of Arab nationalism seem to agree that Arabism turned into Arab nationalism—or, in other words, proto-nationalism became nationalism—towards the end of the First World War after which the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist. Therefore, Arab nationalism emerged as the most viable (if not the only) political choice for local notables who wished to govern their regions, and it emerged just before the Ottoman state disintegrated. As this book will demonstrate, discussions on the emergence of nationalism among the members of the *umma* (or Islamic community) and the role of notables are also illustrative for Kurdish nationalism, which provides the field of Middle Eastern Studies with a comparative case.

Boundaries of the Research

The boundaries of this study fall into three categories: geographical, chronological, and methodological. Geographically, it will focus chiefly on the Kurds who lived in the Ottoman Empire and it is further limited to the region

comprising the present Turkish Republic. This study is limited to Turkey for three reasons: (1) Currently two-thirds of the Kurdish population live in Turkey; (2) since the region was the core of the Ottoman Empire, the continuing intellectual and political relationship between the old imperial center and periphery can be observed; and (3) the largest collection of sources concerning the Kurds is located in Turkey.

Chronologically, the study concentrates on the period stretching from the late Ottoman and World War I era to the early years of the Turkish Republic, although frequent references to earlier periods have been made. This is a period when a large empire collapsed and smaller political entities were in the process of emerging. It was a period of great confusion, particularly in terms of re-defining groups' and individuals' political loyalties. Unless this era of chaos and disorder is carefully and systematically studied, the subsequent social and political developments cannot be properly understood.

Methodologically, this book is concerned mainly with the social and political history of Kurdish nationalism, Kurdish identity, and Ottoman administrative policies in Kurdistan, while acknowledging that other categories such as economic history and intellectual history indisputably overlap with other areas of concern. Although there are ample references to the intellectual activities of the Kurds, such as their involvement in publishing books and newspapers, this study does not claim to be an intellectual history. References to Kurdish intellectual activities are used only to support the points made in the context of social and political history.

Finally, this book is limited to a Kurdish political organization that was actively involved in defining and promoting Kurdish identity. To represent Kurdish nationalism, the Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti (Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan) is selected.³⁷ Although there existed earlier Kurdish political organizations, the SAK is chosen to represent the Kurdish nationalism of this era for two main reasons. First, the SAK was the best-organized Kurdish political organization and was actively involved in creating a uniform Kurdish identity and in disseminating its ideology. Second, its social composition was highly heterogeneous; it consisted of the representatives of different notable families claiming to represent the Kurdish intellectual and nationalist class. This heterogeneity has allowed this book to make more sober observations on early Kurdish nationalist leadership.

Organization and General Arguments of the Chapters

This book is divided into six chapters, including the present introductory one. Although each chapter deals with different arguments and individually contributes to our understanding of the Kurds, the first four collectively pave

the way for the fifth chapter, which specifically discusses the role of Kurdish notables in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism.

The reader will find in the second chapter a discussion of the evolution of Kurdish identity. Examining the stages of Kurdish identity formation in *longue duree*, this chapter makes several arguments. First, it argues against essentialist scholarship on the Kurds, which tends to imply that an unchanging core or an essence of a group (whether Turk, Kurd, or Arab) has always existed and can be identified and recovered from very distant past. This chapter demonstrates that before arriving at its present manifestation, Kurdish identity went through dialectical, dialogical, and monological stages, interacting with and responding to its surroundings.

The second chapter argues that the word “Kurd” was a name given to the nomadic tribes living in and around a specific territory. It was most likely the work of outsiders to imagine and label a very heterogeneous group as Kurds. This argument brings us the second point, which deals specifically with the monological process whereby group identities above the level of a tribal confederacy are most often imposed on the group by outsiders. Here, the argument differs from that of Benedict Anderson, who suggests that nations (ethnic groups, in this case) imagine themselves. The chapter suggests that before they imagine themselves as a nation (or, more correctly, as a nationality), they are imagined as a community by outsiders. They are imagined not only as different from other ethnic groups but also as homogeneous. This concept of constituting a unique community was in turn adopted by the Kurds themselves in the later periods.

To escape narrow interpretations of identity formation, another comparison is useful. The fluid nature of group identity is by no means unique to the Kurds. There are many studies that challenge essentialist views on the origin of different modern societies. For example, in a comprehensive study on the history of the Turkic people, Peter Golden argues that these people are far from being a homogeneous society. He says that “the current demarcations of the Turkic peoples . . . are the result of both complex historical process and more immediate, specific political requirements.”³⁸ There is little doubt about the heterogeneous nature of most modern societies; however, can one speak of homogeneity even in the earliest known “ethnic” societies? In many instances, including the Turkic, we do not have conclusive evidence to suggest that earlier sociopolitical groups were of a homogenous origin, and hence share the common “essence.” Peter Golden persuasively argues that even in its earliest form, the ethnonym “Türk” referred to a political group as opposed to an “ethnic” one (possibly a tribal confederacy) which composed of diverse elements. Earlier nomadic tribes that later adopted the name “Türk” were highly mobile interacting with many local groups and assimilating them into their confederacy. For example, we know that the original clan that claimed political superiority to

other groups was called the *A-shih-na*. As the *A-shih-na* became prominent among the clans, it came to include many client tribes. Together they revolted against their Mongol overlords, the Jou-Jan, and formed the earliest Turkic state in 552 C.E. It is the rise of this first Turkic state (Qağanate) that brought the ethnonym “Türk” to the front. Golden suggests that “This was not only a very rapid rise, but it brought to the fore an ethnonym by which many of the Turkic peoples became known in the non-Turkic world.”³⁹ We do not know the relation between the *A-shih-na* and the word “Türk,” but we do have sufficient evidence to conclude that the present Turkic (or Turkish) identity originated from a tribal confederacy that was inherently cosmopolitan and naturally flexible.

Golden readily admits that locating the earliest mention of the ethnonym “Türk” is highly problematic; there are references to certain groups in antiquity whose names *could* be the original form of “Türk” such as Togarma, Turukha, Turukku and so on.⁴⁰ But the information gap is so substantial that we cannot firmly connect these ancient people to the modern Turks. Chinese and other sources from the mid-sixth century refer to a group of people who were a separate or independent branch of the Hsiung-nu, and originally lived on the right bank of the Aral or Caspian Sea.⁴¹ It is not clear, however, whether or not the Chinese created the ethnonym “Türk” or borrowed it from elsewhere. Islamic sources are generally credited with introducing the term to the west of Central Asia. In any case, it seems that the term was accepted by the tribes as a political group as a result of an interaction between these tribes and outsiders. Hence, at its earliest stage, the process of Turkic identity formation was either monological or dialogical—that is, the label was either imposed on them or it was negotiated and accepted. I believe the former was the case.

In a study on Uighur (Uygur) identity, we can clearly see how the labeling of a group by outsiders was later adopted by the group itself. Dru C. Gladney convincingly argues that Uighur identity was a result of the interaction between the local people and Chinese and Russian states. He goes further and proposes that “The ethnonym ‘Uighur’ was most likely suggested to the Chinese nationality affairs officials by Soviet advisors in Xinjiang in 1930. . . .”⁴² Gladney acknowledges that while a collection of nomadic people called “Uighur” have existed since before the eighth century, “this identity has changed and evolved through radically changing sociopolitical context. The ethnogenesis of Uighur is best understood as a gradual evolution through successive stages of interaction with the Chinese nation-state.”⁴³ The origin of the ethnonym “Uighur” is not very clear, and the etymology of the word cannot accurately be established; however, scholars agree that the term has never referred to a fixed identity. It was first used to denote a political rather than a tribal identity. Later it was used as a linguistic designation. Still later, the Chinese employed the term to mean Muslim. As a result of Chinese colonization in the twentieth century, the term finally arrived at its present denotation. Like Turkic

identity, Uighur identity too has never been rigid and stagnant, though the modern Uighur identity has been somewhat more responsive to the political pressure of surrounding states to define itself and to adopt an ethnic label. The formation of modern Uighur identity was also monological. The second chapter looks into the question of identity formation in the context of the Kurds.

The second chapter also analyzes the significance of a specific territory as the group's homeland. A sense of territoriality contributes greatly to Kurdish identity and nationalism, whereas the Kurdish language, with its several distinct dialects, does not allow the Kurds to think of themselves as a group primarily along linguistic lines. Kurds identify themselves and are identified with a specific territory, Kurdistan. However, the second chapter demonstrates that there has never been a *fixed* Kurdistan and Kurdish identity. The exact boundaries of Kurdistan have always been in flux; and the perceived identity of the Kurd constantly changes, corresponding partly to the changes in the boundaries of Kurdistan.

The third chapter examines the interplay between the Ottoman state and Kurdish tribes since the sixteenth century, a century in which a great number of Kurdish tribes accepted Ottoman sovereignty. This chapter, expanding on the argument made by Martin van Bruinessen in his seminal work *Agha, Shaikh, and State*,⁴⁴ focuses primarily on the administrative structuring of the Ottoman Empire in Kurdistan and its changes over time. It demonstrates the gradual process of Ottoman infiltration into semiautonomous Kurdish emirates or tribal confederacies. It will be shown that the Ottoman state as a dominant political and military power in the region influenced the internal dynamics of Kurdish tribal structure, reconfiguring their tribal perimeters. The Ottoman state did this by molding disparate and multiform Kurdish emirates into more uniform ones with the purpose of creating a more dependable and responsive Kurdish political environment and also of generating more tax income from Kurdistan.

The fourth chapter follows the chronological order established in the previous chapters and examines Kurdish identity and the emergence of Kurdish nationalism in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. This chapter has two main sections. The first section looks into two nineteenth century Kurdish revolts and investigates the nationalist dimensions of Kurdish militancy prior to the twentieth century. The second section provides the reader with information on Kurdish social and political organizations in the early twentieth centuries, such as the Kürdistan Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Society for the Mutual Aid and Progress of Kurdistan), and the Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti (Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan).

After 1908, the Kurds, along with other Ottoman subjects, enjoyed the liberal atmosphere created by the Young Turk Revolution, which reestablished the constitutional monarchy. The Young Turks and their political party, the Committee of Union and Progress, mostly ruled the empire for most of the

years up until the end of World War I in 1918, and they were blamed for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. After the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, the CUP rule became more despotic, but in its earlier years in power the regime was welcomed by many different Ottoman communities, for it promoted equality, justice, and fraternity among all Ottoman subjects. As a result, many cultural and political organizations came into being. It is in this period that Kurdish societies were formed and legally functioned in the Ottoman Empire for the first time. These early Kurdish societies were, however, mainly cultural clubs for the Kurdish nobility. They were established and functioned exclusively in Istanbul, the imperial capital. As indicated in their constitutions, these Kurdish groups saw themselves as ethnically different but at the same time as an integral part of Ottoman society. These societies did not seek secession or even autonomy. Therefore, they can hardly be categorized as nationalist organizations. Rather they were the cornerstones of Kurdish enlightenment in which Kurds focused on their history, culture, language, and literature.

Towards the end of World War I, Kurds in Istanbul also formed political organizations. The first Kurdish society that pursued an open political agenda was the SAK. We can follow the activities of this society through articles in *Jin*, a newspaper published by the SAK; through memoirs of SAK members; through Ottoman and British archival sources; and through early Republican material. All these sources testify that the SAK followed an entirely different path from that of previous Kurdish organizations. Its aim was the establishment of a Kurdish state, and it was through the political activities of the SAK that protonationalism or Kurdism became Kurdish nationalism. Chapter 4 explores the membership, constitution, and political activities of the SAK and compares it to earlier Kurdish organizations. The primary aim of this chapter is to provide a timetable for the emergence of Kurdish nationalism.

The fifth chapter is a prosopographical study of the social, religious, and tribal background of the Kurdish leadership during the World War I era. Searching for patterns in the familial, social, and political backgrounds of early Kurdish nationalist leaders, it offers five principal conclusions that shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of Kurdish nationalism. (1) Kurdish nationalism emerged as a response to the collapsing Ottoman Empire during and after World War I. Therefore, it was not a cause of empire's disintegration, but rather the result of it. The political and military activities of Kurdish notables in the pre-World War I period were not nationalistic but reflected the desire of powerful Kurdish lineages to consolidate, expand, or recover their regional influence. (2) Kurdish leaders, largely of landed notable origin, were mostly higher members of the Ottoman bureaucracy and, as such, an integral part of the Ottoman state. Their well-being depended heavily upon the existence of the state. It was only after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire seemed unavoidable that they actively promoted nationalism. (3) In its infancy, Kurdish

nationalism was heavily affected by preexisting ties and rivalries. These ties were predetermined by the Kurds' own primordial ties and/or religious affiliations. Struggles among the most powerful Kurdish notables continued through opposing factions in Kurdish nationalist politics in the era immediately following World War I. The goals and tactics of these factions were also influenced by their leaders' religious commitment—or the lack of it. (4) Their understanding of and commitment to the idea of nationalism varied considerably. In the era under review, Kurdish nationalism emerged as a secessionist and autonomist movement simultaneously. (5) Finally, the fifth chapter shows that despite historic and contemporary enmities, the leaders of the opposing factions were united by one distinct emotion: their suspicion of and even hostility to Kemalist Turkish nationalism. Overall, this book shows that early Kurdish nationalist politics was highly factionalized and also analyzes the ways in which Kurdish nationalist leaders responded to the collapsing Ottoman state and the emerging Kemalist regime.

The final chapter attempts to place the work in the larger context of Middle Eastern history. Comparisons to Arab nationalism, and particularly to Palestinian nationalism, are made, albeit in a limited fashion. Also presented in this chapter is a synopsis of Kurdish movements in the Republican period. Hopefully, this information will help to point out some directions for future research that focuses entirely upon the Republican period. The Republican period is the link between the past and the present, and the treatment should help the reader to make sense out of Kurdish movements of the present time.

Evolution of Group Identity: The Kurds and Kurdistan in Historical Texts

At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the present one, Kurdish consciousness and Kurdish nationalism have reached a climax. At the present, a form of Kurdish identity exists side by side with its Arab, Turkish, Persian, and Armenian counterparts in the Middle East. However, there is still no consensus even among the Kurds about who belongs to this community. As previously discussed, definitions of an ethnic group is one of the challenges that continue to trouble scholars from all academic disciplines. Although nationalists would like us to believe that fixed group identities existed long before the present and are now in the process of “awakening,” they fall far short of providing convincing evidence that ethnic identities, as we recognize them today, existed in fixed form in history. Students of the modernist school convincingly argue that identity formation is a result of an ongoing evolutionary process and that it has evolved into what it is today.

As we have said, Kurdish identity has passed through irregular stages of monologic, dialogic, and dialectic interaction with outsiders, which most often have been powerful surrounding states. To examine these stages, the present chapter will investigate renderings of the word “Kurd” and explore the evolution of the perceived boundaries of Kurdistan until the twentieth century in historical texts. It is the contention of this chapter that the identity of the Kurdish “homeland” itself has been subject to the above-mentioned stages and has been in constant change. This chapter will demonstrate that throughout the centuries the term “Kurd” never referred to a fixed group of people, and “Kurdistan” was never a constant and rigid entity. One of the problems that will be raised in this chapter is that of the interaction between territory and identity. Do changes in the boundaries of Kurdistan affect or modify, if not determine, who a Kurd is? Or does the definition of a Kurd have a direct effect on the changing boundaries of Kurdistan?

This chapter further suggests that the existence of ethnic identity does not automatically translate into national consciousness. We have indisputable

evidence that Kurdish consciousness of a kind existed among some educated Kurds prior to the twentieth century. However, there are two main problems with accepting premodern Kurdish consciousness as a form of nationalism. First, our perception of the Kurds in the late twentieth century does not correspond entirely with that of the earlier periods. Second, as argued elsewhere, nationalism is a political process that aims to create a unified group consciousness for those who seek self-rule in a historical homeland. Available evidence does not substantiate the claim that nationalism as a political movement existed among the Kurdish community before the early twentieth century. Therefore, references to Kurds and Kurdistan in the examined Kurdish sources do not document the existence of Kurdish nationalism, but only the existence of Kurdish self-consciousness.

Origin of the Kurds

In their attempt to introduce legends of the Kurdish origin, scholars often refer to the *Şerefname*, a sixteenth-century book that narrates a dynastic history of the Kurds. The story of Zakhak contained in it appears to be the most popular legend pertaining to the origin of the Kurds.¹ According to this legend, the Kurds are the children of the populace who fled from the tyranny of Zakhak, a well-known figure who also appears in Ferdowsi's classical epic the *Shahnama*.² Zakhak was the fifth ruler after Jamshid in the mythical Pishdadi dynasty that governed the lands of both Iran and Turan. He was so tyrannical that some historians referred to him as the Shaddad, an ancient ruler who symbolized violence and evil. Due to his evil nature, God punished him with an open wound on each of his shoulders, wounds that resembled serpents. Because of these wounds, Zakhak lived in extreme pain. The best and most skillful doctors could not cure him. Finally, one day Satan himself appeared in Zakhak's court under the guise of a doctor and stated that the only remedy for Zakhak's unending pain was for the brains of two youths to be applied daily to these serpent-shaped wounds. Accordingly, it was decided that every day two youths would be executed and their brains applied to the wounds. Amazingly, this treatment seemed to work.

The practice of putting two young persons to death every day lasted for some time. In the end, the cook who was in charge of slaughtering innocent people had mercy on some of them and allowed one of every two of them escape into the mountains. He mixed the brains of a sheep with brains of the remaining human victim and presented the concoction to Zakhak. As a condition for freeing the prisoners, the cook required that they reside in inaccessible mountains and hence faraway from the tyranny of Zakhak.

Inhabit the mountains they did. In time, these freed people multiplied and filled the mountainous regions, and came to be called the "Kurds." For a

long time, the Kurds stayed away from civilization, forgetting the culture, arts, and civilization they had had before they were freed. They produced a unique language under this unique circumstance.³ Later they came down to the valleys where they became farmers, shepherds, and traders and established villages, fortresses, and towns. The legend does not tell us who called these people “Kurds.”

Although this legend, cited in the *Şerefname*,⁴ alleges that Kurds are the amalgamation of diverse groups who invented their own language and civilization as a result of their isolated residence in the mountains, nationalists assume the existence of a Kurdish essence and endeavor to discover the original core of the Kurds that, they believe, existed at some time in ancient history. One of the most influential statements of this essentialist approach to Kurdish origin comes from a British scholar, G. R. Driver. In his article “The Name Kurd and Its philological Connexions,” Driver examines various ancient words and attempts to establish philological connections between those vocabularies and the term “Kurd” as an ethnic label. Driver suggests that the earliest account of the Kurds comes from a Sumerian clay tablet in the third millennium B.C. on which the name of a land called Kar-da or Qar-da is inscribed. This land, south of Lake Van, was inhabited by the people of “Su” who were connected with the Qur-ti-e, a group of mountain dwellers. It is with the name Qur-ti-e that Driver makes his first etymological connection. According to Driver’s second derivation, an early version of the word “Kurd” is perhaps encountered in Xenophon’s epic *Anabasis* in its reference to the Karduchi or Kardukhi, hostile inhabitants of the region corresponding to present-day Kurdistan.⁵ These people were mountain dwellers living in the territory between Armenia and Mesopotamia. Xenophon narrates the attacks of the Karduchi (also spelled as Carduchi) on the Greek armies during their retreat from the Kardaka land (401–400 B.C.E.).⁶

Driver maintains that the word “Cyrtii,” a collective name for another group who lived around the same area, also have some philological similarities with the word “Kurd.” The Cyrtii people were mentioned by several classical authors, such as Polybius, Livy, and Strabo. They were reportedly an Asiatic tribe who were, like the Kardakes or Karduchi, famous as “slingers.” Driver concludes that the Cyrtii may have been the original Kurds.⁷

Driver’s theories regarding the origin of the Kurds provide the essentialist scholarship with valuable data.⁸ Many scholars rely very heavily on these theories, which have some plausibility. But the evidence remains inconclusive and the theories themselves are highly speculative. Basile Nikitin, a renowned Russian scholar and Kurdologist, rightly points out that the linguistic connection between the terms “Karduchi” and “Kurd is debated by many scholars.⁹

Vladimir Minorsky’s widely cited theory suggests that the Medes (728–550 B.C.E.), who inhabited the land where currently the Kurds are the majority, were the forefathers of the modern Kurds. He also claims that the Medes

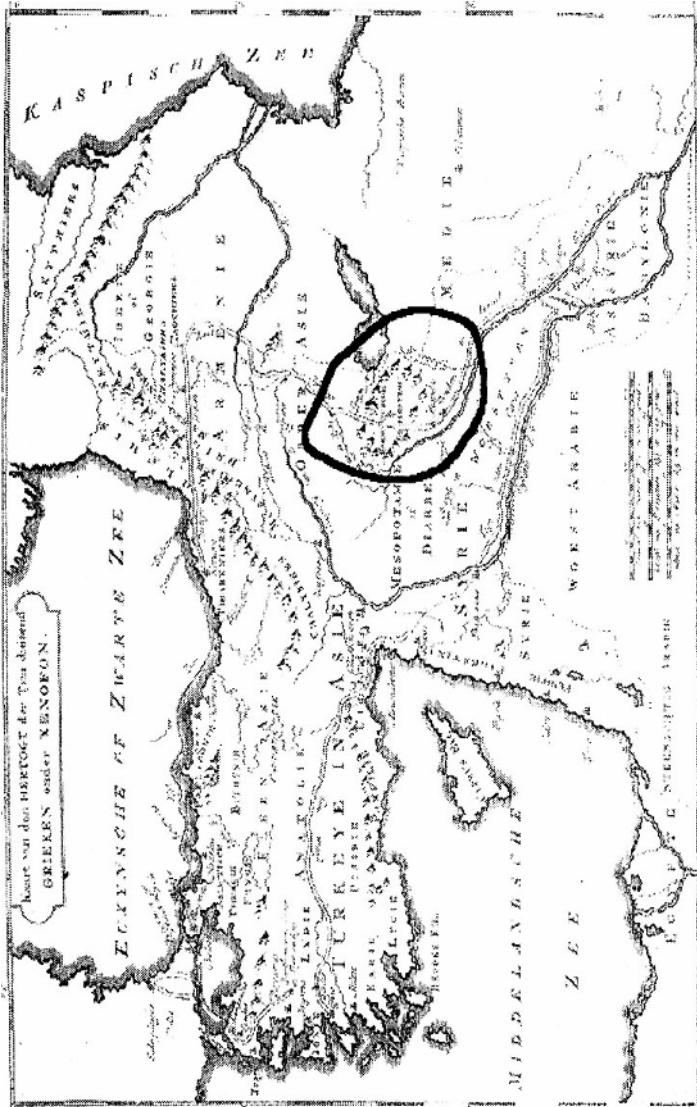


Figure 2/1: The Karduchi territory in Xenophon's time (fifth century B.C.E.). This map, drawn by an unknown later artist, shows the area from which the Greek armies retreated. Source: New York Metropolitan Museum, Middle Eastern Maps section, New York.

who invaded the region in the eighth century B.C.E., linguistically resembled the Kurds.¹⁰ This view was accepted by many Kurdish nationalists in the twentieth century. However, Martin van Bruinessen, a prominent Dutch scholar, argues against the attempt to take the Medes as ancestors of the Kurds. Bruinessen states, “Though some Kurdish intellectuals claim that their people are descended from the Medes, there is not enough evidence to permit such connection across the considerable gap in time between the political dominance of the Medes, and the first attestation of the Kurds.”¹¹

Although there are many disputes about the origin of the Kurds, there is also one thing all these theories have in common. All tend to be autochthonistic (territorially based) in nature. In other words, these theories look at the ancient inhabitants of a specific region, known as “Kurdistan” sometime after the twelfth century, and hope to find etymological connections between these people and the modern Kurds. Therefore, these essentialist theories conclude that the Kurds are those who inhabited a region that is known in ancient history under different names, but is called today “Kurdistan.”

According to an alternate but equally unfounded philological theory, Kurds are one of the original Turkic clans of Central Asia and, therefore, are of Turkish origin. Citing the Orhun (Orkhun) Inscriptions originating from the eighth century C.E.,¹² the earliest known written form of old Turkic, several authors suggest that the Kurds were in a clan of an early Turkic confederacy. These authors base their claim on a word that was transcribed as “Kurd.”¹³ This hypothesis, however, is convincingly refuted by Talat Tekin, a respected Turkologist. Tekin argues that the word “Körtle” (a proper noun) is being misread as “Kürt.”¹⁴ Therefore, the inscription should not be taken as evidence for the Turkic origin of the Kurds.

In search of the origin of the group, I would propose that one should begin with sources in which the term “Kurd”—not any presumed precursor of it—is employed to refer to an ethnolinguistic group. Accordingly, I will examine the connotation of the word only from the time when it first appeared in historical sources.

When was the word “Kurd” first used? Arshak Safrastian traces the origin of the word back to third century C.E., asserting, “In so far it is possible to ascertain from the extant literary documents, the name appears for the first time in a book in the Pahlavi language in the form of Kurd, *Kurdan*. Artakhshir-i Papakan, the founder of the Persian Sasanid Dynasty in 226 C.E., mentions among his many opponents, a Madig, the King of the *Kurdan* (Kurds).”¹⁵ Unfortunately, I am not able to elaborate on implications of the word “Kurdan” in this source, for simply there is not enough information. However, the word “Kurd” is systematically used in Arabic sources, and reliable information regarding the Kurds finally comes with the Arab conquest of the area after the seventh century. Since the Arabs popularized the word “Kurd” (pl. al-Akrad), one might assume that it

is of Arabic origin. However, this would be a risky assumption, for it is conceivable that the Arabs borrowed the word from Persian, Pahlavi, or other Iranic languages. It also seems unlikely that it was of Arabic origin, for Arabic does not contain the root of the word “Kurd.”

Early references to the Kurds in Arab sources generally concern the location and distribution of the Kurdish tribes. Yakubi, a ninth century Arab writer, in his *Kitab al-Buldan* mentions the Kurds as a group of people living in the Jibal region.¹⁶ When discussing a town named “Saymarah” in this district, Yakubi states that Kurds, along with Arabs and Iranians (*ajam*), were the inhabitants of this town. Interestingly Yakubi informs us that all these people spoke Persian, which suggests that Yakubi’s criteria may not necessarily be linguistic.¹⁷

Minorsky mentions Masudi and Istakhri, two tenth-century Arab writers, as important sources, for they provide a list of Kurdish tribes. These sources also mention legends of Kurdish origin such as the Zahhak story, but do not give a clear indication of who, they thought, the Kurds were.¹⁸ In contrast, Muhammad ibn Hawqal, a tenth-century Arab geographer, suggests that Kurds may be of Arab origin.¹⁹ Hawqal describes the Kurds as dwelling mainly in rural settings; but it should be noted that in Hawqal’s accounts the Kurds were also part of large towns such as Mosul. Despite vague descriptions of Kurdish groups and contradictory stories of Kurdish origin, Arab sources seem to regard Kurds mainly as the Bedouins or pastoral nomads of Iran, who inhabited the pastures of the Zagros Mountains in the summer and the lowland plains of eastern Baghdad in the winter.²⁰ Later, elaborating on this view, Minorsky concluded that the term “Kurd” as an ethnic label “was beginning to be applied to an amalgamation of Iranian or Iranicised tribes” in a mountainous territory, despite the fact that some of the latter also included the Semites and Armenians.²¹

It is noteworthy that the Arabs did not use the term “Kurdistan” to denote a specific territory populated by the Kurds. Instead, they applied such geographical appellations or expressions as Jibal (Mountain), Zozan (Summer Pastures), Azerbaijan, and Armenia.²² The term “Kurdistan” was first employed by the Great Seljuks as a term for an administrative unit. In the twelfth century, Sultan Sanjar (d. 1157) established an administrative region located in the eastern part of the Zagros Mountains near Hamadan and called this province “Kurdistan.” Not much is known of the actual administrative structure of Kurdistan. However, we have the accounts of Hamd-Allah Mustawfi of Qazvin, a former state accountant in the service of the Il-Khans, which shed some light on Kurdistan Province. Mustawfi, in his *Nuzhat-al-Qulub* (1340), lists sixteen districts in this province.²³ He indicates the boundaries of Kurdistan in the Seljukid period as follows:

[Kurdistan’s frontiers include] Arabian ‘Iraq, Khuzistan, Persian ‘Iraq, Adharbayjan, and Diyar Bakr. The revenues, in the times of

Sulayman Shah Abuh (the Saljuq), amounted to near 2,000,000 dinars of the present currency, but now the amount on the registers is only 201,500 dinars.²⁴

Mustawfi seemingly confirms that Kurdistan as an administrative unit existed before the fourteenth century. It should be noted, however, that this account of Kurdistan was recorded two centuries after the Sanjar era. In any case, this is the earliest reference to Kurdistan in available historical texts. It is not very clear from this account whether the same administrative structure of Kurdistan continued after the breakup of the Seljuk empire. What is clear from Mustawfi's account is that Kurdistan as an administrative unit did not concern itself with the "ethnic" boundaries of Kurdistan, for it left out some other major Kurdish towns, and was simply an administrative arrangement. We do not know why the Seljukids created the term; nevertheless, as the earliest rendering of "Kurdistan," it upholds the claim that the term was invented by non-Kurds.

Remarkably, as far as is known, the terms "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" were not used as political terms by the indigenous people until the twentieth century. We must be cautious about assuming that in the pre-twentieth century sources Kurdistan had a political connotation.²⁵ On the contrary, Hassan Arfa, in his book *The Kurds: A Historical and Political Study*, suggests that "The name Kurd dates from the Arab invasion of their country. . . . [However] most of the tribes of that time ignored the name Kurd given to them by the Arabs and Iranians, and called themselves by their tribal or clan name of the particular region or valley they were living [in], or from the mountain chain along which they were nomadizing."²⁶ The agency of local people in creating the term "Kurd" is unknown; however, it seems very likely indeed that it was an outsider's term, and that as such it emerged as a result of monological process in which those so labeled adopted the term in the following periods.

Kurds and Kurdistan in Medieval Sources

Şerefhan Bitlisi

The earliest known text by a Kurd that deals exclusively with Kurds and Kurdish history was written only in 1596. Authored by Şerefhan Bitlisi, then the ruler of the Bitlis Emirate, the book is titled the *Şerefname*.²⁷ Written in Persian, the *Şerefname* displays a relatively refined perception of Kurdish groups. Although Şerefhan uses the term "Kurd" repeatedly, he does not define it with precision. It seems that the term denotes a collective identity associated with a geographical region—Kurdistan—which he defines more objectively:

The boundaries of the Kurdish land begin at the sea of Hürmüz [the Persian Gulf] and stretch on an even line to the end of Malatya and Maraş. The area north of this line includes Fars, Irak-ı Acem [the Khuzistan region of southwest Iran], Azerbaijan, and Little and Great Armenia. To the south, there are Irak-ı Arab, Mosul, and Diyarbakır. . . .²⁸

Accordingly, the Kurds are the inhabitants of Kurdistan. Şerefhân's sophisticated understanding of Kurdish society is further evident in his categorization of the Kurdish groups and dialects. According to him, Kurdish tribes can be divided into four groups based on tradition, language, and social condition: Kurmanc, Lur (Lor), Kelhur, and Goran.²⁹ Interestingly, the Zaza speakers, one of the sublinguistic groups whose Kurdishness is hotly debated at the present, are not included in his list. However, Şerefhân includes the Lurs, whose origin is also debated at the present, into his list of Kurdish groups. Şerefhân claims that a group of four hundred Kurdish families migrated to Luristan from "Sımak," a mountainous region near Damascus in the twelfth century and became part of the confederacy of Muhammad Hurshid. Soon after, the Kurdish tribes took control of the confederacy; they also controlled Luristan.³⁰ Şerefhân's account is vague in dealing with the Lurs. We do not know, for example, his criteria for labeling the Lurs as Kurds and whether or not Kurdish migration to Luristan in the twelfth century has something to do with his categorization. We do know, however, that in Şerefhân's mind, the Lurs were a part of the greater Kurdish society. The argument that Luristan was a part of Kurdistan became significant in the twentieth century when maps of Kurdistan did not include Luristan.³¹

Şerefhân's understanding of Kurdish identity should not be confused with the current understanding of it. What is striking in Şerefhân's account is not only the specific boundaries of Kurdish society or the limits of "ethnic" identity, but also the origin of the Kurds. Speaking of Kurdish dynasties, for example, Şerefhân does not hesitate to trace the origin of many Kurdish families to Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties of Arabic. In his mind, this does not constitute a contradiction, despite the fact that Arabs and the Kurds belong to separate ethnolinguistic categories. This is very illustrative of pre-twentieth-century ways of categorizing human groups and is certainly not unique to Şerefhân. As indicated earlier, Arab geographers also did not see any discrepancy in speaking of the Kurds as a people of Arab origin.³²

As one of the most significant sources of Kurdish dynastic history and of sixteenth century Ottoman-Safavid relations, the *Şerefname* is a vitally significant text. However, to understand the author's perception of the Kurds, a closer examination of Şerefhân's career and of the *Şerefname* is required. Born in Safavid Iran on 20 February 1543, Şerefhân spent his childhood in the Safavid court under the protection of Shah Tahmasp (1524–76).³³ At the age of twelve, Şerefhân was given the title "amir of the Kurds" by Shah Tahmasp, a title he

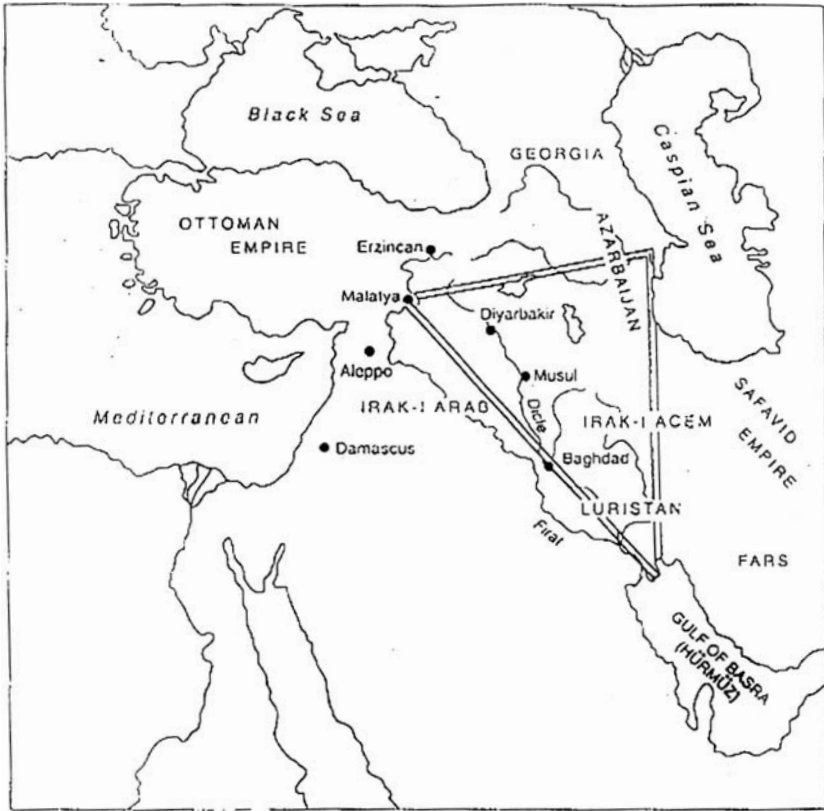


Figure 2/2: Kurdistan according to Şerefhān.

held for three years. After Shah İsmail II's accession to the Safavid throne in 1576, Şerefhān became the governor of Nakhshivan in Azerbaijan and Shirvan with the title of *amir al-umara* of the Kurds. When the Ottomans captured these regions in 1578, Ottoman Sultan Murad III offered him the governorship of the Bitlis *sancak*, a region where his family had ruled for generations.³⁴ Having grown up and been educated in the Safavid court, Şerefhān was well-versed in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic and seems to have had access to the Safavid administrative records, as well as to books in Persian, Ottoman, and Arabic. It seems that his perception of the Kurds and Kurdistan was influenced by the views presented by Arab and Persian geographers, administrators, and historians.

As stated earlier, sources in the twentieth century referred uniformly to the *Şerefname* in discussing the origin of Kurdish identity, and the story of Zahhak captured the attention of many scholars. This story is significant not

only because it tells us a legend of the Kurdish origin, but more importantly it gives us clues about Şerefhan's sources. In his book, the author himself acknowledges that he utilized several books in writing his masterpiece, including the *Shahnama* of Ferdowsi. The *Shahnama* gives the story of the origin of the Kurds more or less the way the *Şerefname* gives it. After telling the story of Zahhak and the people who escaped from his tyranny, Ferdowsi concludes his section with the following couplets:

When the two hundred men [i.e., the escapees] came together
 In such a way that they did not know one another
 [The cook]³⁵ gave them for their livelihood some goats and ewes
 And set the desert before them [sent them to the uninhabited land].
 Now, the Kurds have their origin from that race
 So that they do not recall the civilization.³⁶

Although it seems likely that Şerefhan adopted the story from Ferdowsi, we know that it existed before Ferdowsi. For example, Masudi, a tenth century Arab historian, in his book *Muruj al-dhahab wa-ma'adin al-jawhar*, mentions a version of the story similar to that of Ferdowsi and Şerefhan.³⁷ Masudi is one of the earliest known writers who employs the word "Kurd," and mentions the Zahhak story as a legend of Kurdish origin. Therefore, a possibility remains that Şerefhan also read Masudi.³⁸ Whatever the sources of Şerefhan were, the existence of this story in the earlier period demonstrates that the term "Kurd" was used as an ethnic label six hundred years before Şerefhan and that the term was first employed by non-Kurds to designate a collective identity.

Şerefhan also claims that other mythical figures were Kurds. For example, he states that Ferdowsi refers to Rostem bin Zal, a major figure in the *Shahnama*, as someone of Kurdish origin.³⁹ Quite possibly he is thinking of the adjective *kurd* attached to Rostem (Rostem-i Kurd) by Ferdowsi. However, an argument can be made that the very same word can be read as *gurd* (hero) in Persian,⁴⁰ and indeed such is the general translation of the word. Scholars of Persian studies uniformly agree that the word employed in the *Shahnama* just means "hero," and was not used as an ethnic term.

Could Şerefhan, who learned Persian very likely as his first language in the Safavid Palace, have misread Ferdowsi? It seems very unlikely that a scholar of Şerefhan's caliber whose work, the *Şerefname*, is considered one of the finest examples of Persian literature, could have misread the word. Then, why did Şerefhan manipulate, (for the lack of better word), the *Shahnama*? No one knows. One can speculate, however, that by claiming such a well-known and respected figure of Persian mythology as a Kurd, he wanted to legitimize Kurdish society, of which he was a member.

In sum, the *Şerefname* provides us with evidence that by the sixteenth century, at least one Kurd used "Kurd" as a general, quasi-ethnic term to iden-

tify the local population of Kurdistan. I have argued that the external classification of the Kurds played a significant role in Şerefhan's perception of the Kurdish society as a whole. Şerefhan clearly did not travel throughout the whole region that he called Kurdistan, nor, apparently, did he study the Kurdishness of each tribe he deemed to be Kurdish. He most likely adopted his usage from the Safavid and Ottoman bureaucratic and administrative machinery. If it is recalled that Şerefhan was installed as the *amir* of the Kurds by the Safavids, it becomes evident that the Safavids had already determined who the Kurds were. This is also apparent in Şerefhan's attempt to trace the origin of Kurdish dynasties to respected Abbasid and Umayyad families, which was already suggested by Arab geographers in the ninth century. It seems likely that Şerefhan converted the etic (outsider's) view of Kurdish identity into the emic (indigenous) definition and manipulated it to gain prestige for the Kurds by including well-respected people in the Kurdish community. This is not to say, however, that Şerefhan's views and definitions in the sixteenth century reflect a general perception of the "Kurdish society" as a whole. On the contrary, many in Şerefhan's "imagined community," to borrow Benedict Anderson's term, did not consider themselves Kurds until the twentieth century. In other words, the group that he described as Kurds had never constituted either a political or a cultural unity—except, of course, in the minds of a few Kurdish thinkers. As a result of the lack of a power structure—such as an established state—to decide on who the Kurds are and to implement its decision, the Kurds, at the present, still debate the same issue.

The Seventeenth Century: Ahmed-i Hani

A hundred years after Şerefhan, Ahmed-i Hani (Ehmede Xani, b. 1651), a Kurdish man of religion and a poet, demonstrated a clear group consciousness when he distinguished the Kurds from Arabs, Turks, and Iranians. In a section titled "Derde Me" ("Our ills") in his well-known epic *Mem-u Zin*,⁴¹ which was completed in 1695, Hani writes:

If only there were harmony among us,
 If we were to obey a single one of us,
 He would reduce to vassalage
 Turks, Arabs and Persians, all of them.
 We would perfect our religion, our state,
 and would educate ourselves in learning and wisdom . . .⁴²

Look, from the Arabs to the Georgians,
 The Kurds have become like towers.
 The Turks and Persians are surrounded by them.

The Kurds are on all four corners.
 Both sides have made the Kurdish people
 Targets for the arrows of fate.
 They are said to be keys to the borders,
 Each tribe forming a formidable bulwark.
 Whenever the Ottoman Sea [Ottomans] and Tajik Sea [Persians]
 Flow out and agitate,
 The Kurds get soaked in blood.
 Separating them [the Turks and Persians] like an isthmus.⁴³

Inspired by another epic, the *Meme Alan*, that was transmitted orally in the region, Ahmed-i Hani's epic is in appearance a love story between Mem and Zin with the exception of the section mentioned above. By virtue of this section and the fact that the epic is written in the Kurmanci dialect of Kurdish, Ahmed-i Hani's version of *Mem-u Zin* is regarded as the "national epic of the Kurds" by present-day Kurdish nationalists. This section does regard the Kurds as a tribal confederation, and more importantly, seeks self-rule for them.⁴⁴

One can find plenty of references to the Kurds in the section titled "Our ills." Hani seems to use the word "Kurd" or its Arabic plural al-Akrad interchangeably with Kurmanci, a sublinguistic group in Kurdish society.⁴⁵ This fact clearly testifies that Hani regards the Kurmanci speakers as Kurds; yet it is not very clear whether he regards other groups—such as the Zazas, Lurs or Kelhurs—as Kurds. Unlike the *Şerefname*, *Mem u Zin* does not mention any of the other subgroups and categorize them as Kurds. Nor does he explicitly define "Kurdistan." Kurdistan, in Hani's account, is rather implicitly described as a region lying in the middle of Persian (Ajam), Ottoman (Rum), Arab, and Georgian (Gürcü) land.⁴⁶ Did the word "Kurd" mean only the Kurmanci speakers of Hani, living in between the above-mentioned groups? The opposite is indisputably the understanding of the Kurds in the twentieth century. But no information exists that indicates that Hani's definition is inclusive and incorporates other linguistic groups within the umbrella of the Kurds, and one can question whether Ahmed-i Hani's perception of the Kurdish society coincided with that of the twentieth-century writers.

From the quantity of the surviving copies, one can conclude that *Mem-u Zin* was read widely in Kurdistan in later times and that manuscripts were copied by local religious leaders (imams and mollas of Kurmanci origin) and by Sufi tarikats.⁴⁷ However, information simply does not exist as to how many people read Hani's version of the epic and what messages they received from it.⁴⁸ *Mem u Zin* was written in verse, which made it easier to memorize, and was undoubtedly a very popular story. But, it is unclear whether *Mem u Zin*'s continuing popularity stems from its love story, or from its protest of Persian and Ottoman misrule.⁴⁹ What is indisputable is that in the twentieth century, the

epic took pride of place in Kurdish literature as the first manifestation of Kurdish nationalism.

Nonetheless, it is misleading to label *Mem u Zin* as nationalist literature.⁵⁰ For one thing, it is highly unlikely that Ahmed-i Hani sought a nation-state for the Kurds. His complaints about the Safavid or Ottoman rule and his desire for a Kurdish (Kurmanci?) king do not in themselves prove that Kurdish nationalism as a political movement existed in the seventeenth century. There is a wide gap in our knowledge to make such a claim by merely interpreting Hani's resentment of the Ottoman and Persian rule. In fact, it was only after the penetration of the Western concept of nationalism into the Kurdish community early in the twentieth century that *Mem-u Zin* became a monument of nationalist literature for the Kurds and mobilized them politically. In the seventeenth century, Hani possibly concerned himself only with the Kurmanci speakers, and hence his perception of the Kurds consisted mainly of the tribal Kurmancis. Consequently, it is not the epic but the political and the intellectual environment of the nationalist era that *retrospectively* qualified this piece of literature as nationalist.

Compared to Şerefhan, Ahmed-i Hani was more resentful of Safavid and Ottoman rule in the region, and his poem calls forcefully for Kurdish self-rule. Şerefhan's perception of Kurdish society, on the other hand, seems to be closer to modern Kurdish identity than that of Hani. In my judgment, this difference arises from the distinction in their careers. Şerefhan was a statesman at the Safavid court and a local ruler in the Ottoman administrative structure. As such, he benefited from his contacts with a variety of people, such as scholars, and soldiers, who traveled to parts of Kurdistan that he himself could not. It is very likely that Şerefhan relied on their accounts to describe the boundaries of Kurdistan. Ahmed-i Hani, on the other hand, was a local religious figure; his access to that kind of information was limited.⁵¹ This might be a reason for Hani's seemingly more restrictive perception of the Kurds. Nevertheless, Şerefhan and Hani each authored a major text in which the word "Kurd" is used to refer to a distinct identity.

Evliya Çelebi: A View of An Ottoman Traveler

When the Ottoman state expanded towards the east in the sixteenth century to include the Kurdish territories, the terms "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" were commonly in circulation and frequently used in Ottoman sources. Although in many Ottoman writings Kurds and Kurdistan are mentioned, only a few can match Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* for depth and for a vivid description of the region in the seventeenth century. Evliya Çelebi (1611–84/85) traveled in Kurdistan several times between 1640 and 1655. There exist many translations of

the text; yet most are incomplete. However, some sections on Evliya Çelebi's travels in Kurdistan were satisfactorily edited and translated to western languages in the late 1980s and 1990s.⁵² Fortunately, we also have a copy of a manuscript of *Seyahatname* to rely on and in comparing these translations.

In his book of travels, Evliya Çelebi provides us with extensive information about Kurdish towns, language, and culture, and, more importantly, the geographic definition of Kurdistan. We do not know his criteria for who is a Kurd and who is not.⁵³ However, Kurdistan itself is described fairly precisely in his fourth volume. According to Evliya, the boundaries of Kurdistan are as follows:

Kurdistan is a vast land. It includes Erzurum, Van, Hakkari, Cizre, İmadiyye, Mosul, Şehrîzor, Harîr, Ardalan, Baghdad, Derne, [and] Derteng. Until it reaches Basra, this land which includes seventy stages is regarded as the rocky land of Kurdistan (*Kurdistan u sengistan*). . . . If six thousand Kurdish tribes and clans (*aşair u kabail*) did not constitute a powerful block between Irak-ı Arab and the Ottomans, it would be very easy for the Iranians (*kavm-ı Acem*) to invade Anatolia (*diyar-ı Rum*). . . . Kurdistan's width is not as great as its length. From its eastern border with Iran to its western border—that is from the lands of Harîr, Ardalan to the territories of Şam and Irak-ı Arab, which is Aleppo—Kurdistan's width is twenty to twenty-five stages and at its narrowest, it is fifteen stages long.⁵⁴

Evliya Çelebi's definition of the boundaries of Kurdistan comes very close to that of Şerefhan. Like Şerefhan, Evliya Çelebi stretches the southern border down to the Persian Gulf (the Gulf of Basra). We know that Evliya Çelebi read the *Şerefname*; hence, it is not surprising that his definition of Kurdistan overlaps with that of Şerefhan.⁵⁵ Evliya Çelebi, in his *Seyahatname*, also remarks on Kurdish language:

There are twelve dialects in Kurdish that resemble one another so little that the people communicate only with a translator. . . . [These are the dialects of] Zaza, Lulu, Cilovi-i Hakkari, Avniki, Mahmudi, Şirvani, Cizrevi, Pisani, Sincari, Hariri, Ardalani, Sorani, Haliti, Çekvani, İmadi, and Rojiki.⁵⁶

Although Evliya states that twelve dialects (*lisan*) exist, his list includes sixteen.⁵⁷ Clearly, some of these designations are tribal, not linguistic, and it seems that Evliya uses the term *lisan* arbitrarily. It should not be surprising that Evliya confuses tribal names with dialects, for he did not have knowledge of any of the Kurdish dialects. Therefore, he must have come to his conclusion based upon what he heard while traveling the region. The sig-

nificance of this list is that Evliya, unlike Ahmed-i Hani, makes it very clear that the Zaza speakers are a part of the Kurdish society. If Evliya's Zazas are not an entirely different people than those of the present, then his categorization becomes significant especially when one considers that presently, as I have mentioned, there is a controversy about the Kurdishness of Zaza speakers.⁵⁸ Since Evliya gathered his information from local sources in the region, one can conclude that the Zaza speakers were considered Kurds by Evliya's sources. Then a question arises, a question for which we do not have a definitive answer: how widespread in the seventeenth century was the perception that the Zazas were Kurds?

From the list Evliya provides for the Kurdish dialects, we can assume that both language and territory played a significant role in his definition of the Kurds. After consulting with local sources and perhaps reading some of the earlier books on the Kurds, Evliya seems to form an image of Kurdistan, manifested in his attempt to draw the boundaries of it. His accounts of Kurds and Kurdistan provide us with a vivid picture of the area and the people living in it, seen through the eyes of a seventeenth-century Ottoman traveler. In the following period, we have many references to Kurds and Kurdistan. However, none of the primary sources are concerned essentially with defining them, nor do they give us clear clues in understanding what they mean when they use these geographic and ethnic terms. We have a much better, albeit still incomplete, understanding of the Kurds and Kurdistan in the nineteenth century, when the Kurds themselves became actively involved in searching for and promoting Kurdish identity.

Kurds and Kurdistan in the Late Ottoman Period

Kürdistan: The First Kurdish Newspaper

In the reign of Abdulhamid II (1876–1909) the Kurds began producing literature on the condition of the Kurds in Istanbul. In these publications one can find a wealth of information on how the Kurds perceived themselves and Kurdistan. The Bedirhan family, one of the most influential families of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was actively involved in newspaper publishing. *Kürdistan*, the first Kurdish newspaper, was published by this family. This Kurmanci/Turkish newspaper (1898–1902) aimed at drawing the attention of the sultan to the Kurds. In several articles, Mikdat Midhat Bedirhan, the founder and editor of the newspaper, published open letters to Sultan Abdulhamid II. These letters indicated that a transtribal Kurdish identity was in the process of being established among the growing Kurdish elite in the late nineteenth century. Also clear from the articles published in the newspaper is that

the terms “Kurds” and “Kurdistan” had begun to have some political implications. However, one should be cautious about labeling this newspaper as nationalist literature, for it did not call for the self-determination of the Kurdish community, albeit it saw the Kurds an ethnopolitical group within the empire. The majority of the articles wished to disclose mistreatments of government officials in Kurdistan. For example, one letter requests the sultan to attend to the abuse of the Kurds:

My Sultan, as you might know, as a result of the tyranny of the Ottoman officials in Kurdistan, very many Kurds left their homeland and migrated to Iran . . . and they kindly request your help.⁵⁹

In another article, the editor clearly declares his intention in publishing this newspaper:

I, as one of the distinguished members of the Kurdish notables, because of the Prophet’s order commanding “you all are shepherds and responsible for your flock,” to fulfill my obligation publish this newspaper in Kurdish with the hope of educating the Kurds in arts and science and raising their consciousness to the modern level.⁶⁰

Although this newspaper cannot be seen as nationalist literature, *Kürdistan* gives us clues about Kurdish perception of their identity in this period. For example, an article claims that the Kurds are one of the most distinguished people in the Ottoman Empire and that they are proud of being members of the Ottoman society.⁶¹ Articles in the newspaper present Kurds both as a separate group and at the same time as an integral part of the Ottoman society.

Unfortunately, although the word “Kurd” is used frequently in the newspaper, its meaning is never made clear. There are indications, however, that Kurdish identity was connected closely to territory. Addressing the Kurds, Abdurrahman Bedirhan writes:

Humans live necessarily in groups. Hence, the well-being of an individual depends heavily upon a society with which he has ties. . . . The endurance of a society depends on the land on which the members gather. . . . So that, the real person [*insan-ı hakiki*] protects with his life this land on which he grew up and by which he was able to feed himself.⁶²

Abdurrahman Bedirhan implicitly emphasizes the important role of territory, which creates solidarity among the sharers of a land.⁶³ This article is representative of the general tendency in historical sources to articulate the essential role of territory in defining a particular group identity.

From the time of Evliya Çelebi to the late nineteenth century terms “Kurd” and “Kurdistan” were used very liberally in the Ottoman sources.⁶⁴ In the nineteenth century, however, the term “Kurdistan” became an administrative designation. In 1847 the Ottoman state formed a large province with clear boundaries and an administrative structure and called it Kürdistan Eyaleti (Kurdistan Province). This was the third “Kurdistan” as an administrative unit that had been established in the Middle East. Prior to the Ottoman Kurdistan, the Great Seljuks and the Iranians had provinces named “Kurdistan.” The Ottoman creation of Kurdistan province will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. After the dissolution of the Kurdistan Province in 1867, Ottoman writers attempted to describe Kurdistan as the land of the Kurds. Among well-known examples of this group of sources, the writings of Şemseddin Sami appear to be the most noteworthy.

Şemseddin Sami

Şemseddin Sami (1850–1904), in his famous encyclopedia *Kamusul-Alem*, defines Kurdistan as follows:

Kurdistan is a large land in western Asia. Most of it remains in the Ottoman Empire, but some of it belongs to Iran. It is called Kurdistan, for the majority of its inhabitants are Kurds. However, this name [Kurdistan] does not have political or administrative connotations at the present time. In the past the name Kurdistan was given to a territory where currently the Ottoman Empire and Iran have established “the province of Kurdistan.” . . . It is notoriously hard to define the exact boundaries of Kurdistan, but approximately we can say that it starts from the shores of the lakes Urumiye and Van [stretching down towards] the rivers Diyale and Dicle [Tigris] to where Karasu mounts Fırat [Euphrates] and from there north towards the line that separates Aras from the basin of the Dicle and Fırat. Hence, it includes in the Ottoman Empire a part of Mosul, which is the territory lying on the left side of Dicle and Van, Bitlis, and parts of Diyarbakır province, and Memaret ül Aziz [present-day Elazığ] and Dersim. In Iran Kurdistan covers half of Azerbaijan and the province known as Kurdistan. In this way, Kurdistan remains in a territory neighboring Azerbaijan in the northeast, Irak-ı Ajam in the east, Luristan and Irak-ı Arab in the south, Cizre in the southeast, and Anatolia in the northwest. It resembles an upside-down pear that is located within the latitudes of 34–39 degrees and the longitudes of 37–46 degrees.⁶⁵

Although the source of his knowledge is unknown, and although he admits that drawing a map of Kurdistan is a very challenging task, Şemseddin Sami seems

well-informed in his estimation of Kurdistan. Besides providing an important example of the nineteenth-century Ottoman literature by a non-Kurd, his writing is notable for indicating that the Kurds were seen as a distinct subgroup within the Ottoman public. In other words, at the turn of the century, Kurds were considered a distinct group, yet an integral part of the Ottoman society, and hence the term was used freely. Later, as the Kurds became more politicized and posed a threat to the integrity of the state, the terms “Kurd” and “Kurdistan” were intentionally replaced with “mountain Turks” and “eastern Anatolia” in order to officially deny their existence.

Compared to the descriptions of the boundaries of Kurdistan by Şerefhan and Evliya Çelebi, Sami’s description seems more precise and somewhat conservative. Acknowledging relations and kinship (*karabet-i cinsiye*) between the Lurs and the Kurds, Sami maintains that “there exists dislike (*münaferet*) between the two groups, and the Lurs do not consider themselves Kurds.”⁶⁶ Consequently, unlike Şerefhan and Evliya Çelebi, Şemseddin Sami excludes Luristan from his map of Kurdistan. It is worth repeating that in the twentieth century the degree of Kurdishness of Luristan became a controversial issue just as the degree of Kurdishness of Zaza speakers.

The Post-World War I Period

After World War I, the concept of Kurdish identity gained momentum and gradually was adopted by nationalist movements. One of the significant chroniclers of this was the newspaper *Jin*, which, as I have mentioned, was a publication of the SAK (Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan). Articles from *Jin* indicate that Kurdish identity now began developing separately from Ottoman identity, in contrast to the previous era, in which Kurdish identity was perceived as a part of Ottoman identity. We also see in this era many people commenting on the boundaries of Kurdistan. Their diverse versions of the boundaries of Kurdistan are a result of attempts to match the “ethnic” boundaries with the political and administrative ones. These attempts stemmed from the restructuring of the Middle East by the Western powers or were a response to it. Kurdish nationalists were keenly aware of the new nationalist criteria, which culminated in the Wilsonian principles, and they attempted to redraw the political boundaries of Middle East. They were not shy in proposing various maps of Kurdistan that reflected their political orientations and their hope to create a Kurdish state. However, these maps, presented to the representatives of Western powers, showed no uniform view regarding the ethnic and political boundaries of Kurdistan.

A note given to the Paris Peace Conference on 22 March 1919 by Şerif Pasha, who represented the SAK on behalf of the Kurds drew the boundaries of

Turkish Kurdistan as follows: “The frontiers of Turkish Kurdistan, from an ethnographical point of view, begin in the north at Ziven, on the Caucasian frontier, and continue westwards to Erzeroum Erzindjian, Kemah, Arabkir, Behismi and Divick; in the south they follow the line from Haran, the Sindjihar Hills, Tel Asfar, Erbil, Kerkuk, Suleimanie, Akk-el-man, Sinna; in the east, Ravandiz, Bash-Kale, Vizir-Kale, that is to say the frontier of Persia as far as Mount Ararat.”⁶⁷

The map of Kurdistan that Şerif Pasha included in his presentation created much controversy among the Kurdish nationalists. It excluded the Lake Van region from Kurdistan, presumably in favor of Armenia. Conceivably, Şerif Pasha, heading the Kurdish delegation, and his Armenian counterpart, Bogos Nubar Pasha, had reached an agreement about the political borders of Armenia and Kurdistan prior to the Paris Peace Conference. As a result, the only map of Kurdistan that excluded Van from Kurdistan took its place among historical documents. Şerif Pasha’s map, without a doubt, demonstrates the existence of a dialectical process.

Many Kurds including Emin Ali Bedirhan, the vice president of the SAK, rejected this map, for it compromised Kurdistan’s northern border. In a letter to the president of the Paris Peace Conference, Emin Ali opposed the Armenian

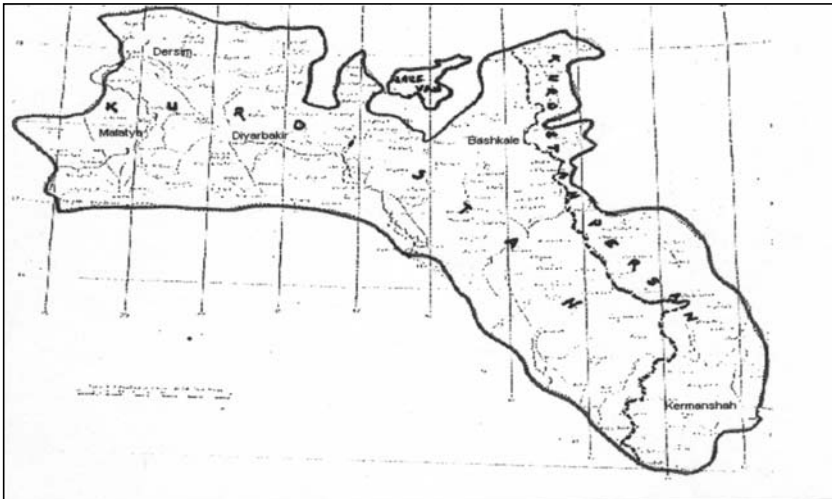


Figure 2/3: A map of Kurdistan by Şerif Pasha presented to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. It was published in Şerif Pasha’s pamphlet *Memorandum sur les Revendication du Peuple Kurde* (Paris: A. G. L. Hoir, 1919). The pamphlet was also published in English under the title *Memorandum on the Claims of the Kurd People* by the same publisher in the same year. Here the borders of Kurdistan do not reach the Mediterranean or the Persian Gulf. Since the copy of the map I obtained was very blurry, I have highlighted the borders to make it more presentable.



Figure 2/4: A map of Kurdistan according to Emin Ali Bedirhan. FO 371/5068/4396, 20 March, 1920, part of the memo given by the Central Club of Kurdistan demanding independence and protesting against extension of Armenian boundaries. Given by Emin Ali Bedirhan to the acting British High Commissioner in Istanbul Richard Webb. Emin Ali connects Kurdistan to the Mediterranean Sea. Again, I have highlighted the boundaries to make it more presentable.

territorial demands in the region, claiming that “Kurdish lands consist of the Ottoman *vilayets* of Diyarbakır, Harput, Bitlis, Van, Mosul and the *sancak* of Urfa [where the Kurds are the majority].”⁶⁸ When Emin Ali submitted his own map to the British High Commissioner in Istanbul, Richard Webb, it included Van and extended the boundaries of Kurdistan to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

When the two maps are compared, it becomes apparent that they both corresponded to political realities, as the individuals perceived them. To Şerif Pasha, collaboration with the Armenian delegate, as we have said, appears to have been a significant determinant in shaping the borders of a future Kurdistan. On the other hand, Emin Ali Bedirhan was acutely aware of the importance of having access to the Mediterranean Sea. The southern and eastern borders of Kurdistan appear to be identical on both maps. In contrast to the *Şerefname*, these maps do not include Luristan in the south.⁶⁹ Perceptions of the boundaries of Kurdistan were bound to fluctuate according to the agendas of those describing them. Since these maps claim to be based on the population inhabiting these territories, one can suggest that the idea of borders of Kurdish society can also fluctuate.

Conclusion

There seems to be a consensus among the great majority of scholars that ethnic identity is fluid and evolves in time. No doubt it will continue to evolve

in accordance with the needs of its members, its periods and its surroundings. This evolutionary view clearly contradicts the idea that the origins of ethnic identities can be discovered in the most remote times. Such an unbroken connection has very often been postulated and promoted by nationalists to legitimize their demands for self-determination. Clearly, demonstration of any fluidity of identity would undermine the “sacredness” of nationalism, since the very justification of it depends firmly upon a belief in a “fixed” group identity.

Surveying the change in the rendering of “Kurds” and “Kurdistan” in earlier historical texts, this chapter has demonstrated the evolution of the concept of Kurdish identity. Clearly, accepting the existence of a fixed homeland and a timeless Kurdish identity is highly problematic for the Kurds, just as it is for the other ethnic groups. The boundaries of Kurdistan, as the Kurds would recognize them today, shrank considerably as a result of the political restructuring of the Middle East. Despite a perceived core that perpetuates itself, the boundaries that define Kurdistan and the perimeters of Kurdish identity have always been in flux.

This chapter has also shown that a reliable link between modern Kurdish identity and the ancient groups that inhabited Kurdistan cannot be established. It has demonstrated that the origin of a word cannot be equated with the origin of an ethnic group. Therefore, one must begin examining the change in the meaning of the word “Kurd” from its first manifestation in historical sources. As mentioned, it is in early Islamic sources that we find the word “Kurd” employed with great frequency to refer to a quasi-ethnic group. Arab geographers, when describing the lands they visited and their inhabitants, mentioned the Kurds. These writers listed the names of Kurdish tribes in their books, which also included legends of Kurdish origin. Available information does not allow us, however, to accurately trace the origin of these legends and to make bold statements about the meaning of the word “Kurd.” These legends were most likely taken from popular stories orally transmitted in the region. This mentioning of the Kurds in the early Islamic sources, nevertheless, provides us a point of departure in our quest to understand the evolution of Kurdish identity.

Kurds themselves did not begin writing their own history until the sixteenth century, or at least no previous record has survived. Therefore, the starting point for examining the transformation of Kurdish identity—or more correctly, of what the early Kurdish writers recognized it to be—begins with the *Şerefname*, the first book of Kurdish dynastic history. This book gives us clues about how a sixteenth-century Kurdish ruler perceived the Kurds. Here again, we lack the essential information concerning the criteria of being a Kurd. However, based on the *Şerefname*, we can make two observations: first, we can state that external sources were critical in shaping Şerefhan’s view of Kurds and Kurdistan. This is consistent with previous and later sources in that the perceptions of Kurd and Kurdistan were shaped by considerations of external groups.

Secondly, as is the case in a great majority of historical sources, the *Şerefname* gives considerable agency to territory in defining one's identity. Defining the boundaries of Kurdistan seems to be less daunting than classifying the Kurds themselves. Even in the twentieth century, there were far more attempts to define "Kurdistan" than to define "Kurds."

As indicated above, this does not mean, however, that there has ever been agreement about the exact boundaries of Kurdistan. With a lack of strong state structure of their own to define, promote and defend the political boundaries of Kurdistan, the Kurds have failed to come to a consensus of who should be included or excluded from the Kurdish society. It is a known fact that the Lurs do not consider themselves as Kurds. In most present-day maps, contrary to the assertion of Şerefhān in the sixteenth century, Luristan is not attached to Kurdistan. Moreover, the Zazas, a subgroup that is traditionally considered Kurdish, have been reexamining their own identity, and, at present, there exists a pronounced Zaza identity independent from the Kurdish one. Moreover, claims of Armenians on the same territory further obscure the perimeters of Kurdistan. The political boundaries of Kurdistan seem to shift and fluctuate based on the political agendas of those promoting them.

The role of territory in the process of identity formation has always been very crucial. Throughout the centuries Kurds have been identified with and associated with a territory. Presently many Kurds do not speak any of the Kurdish dialects and communicate with one other through a third language. In addition, not all Kurds share the same religious belief or historical experience. For many, the common denominator is simply a shared territory in which they believe their people originated.⁷⁰ This is a very significant fact in understanding the nature of early Kurdish nationalism, which demanded the self-rule for the Kurds in their historic homeland of Kurdistan.

Before arriving at its most current manifestation, Kurdish identity passed, as we have said, through monological, dialectical, and dialogical stages. In each of these stages, an outside power was present to help shape the evolution of Kurdish identity. In most instances, the outside power was represented by a strong state, which interfered with the internal dynamics of Kurdish society. The next chapter will demonstrate the role of the Ottoman state in reconfiguring Kurdish tribal structures, a process that contributed to the emergence of Kurdish nationalism.

State-Tribe Relations: Ottoman Empire and Kurdish Tribalism Since the Sixteenth Century

Tribes and their relationship to the states of the Middle East have been the mutual interest of anthropologists and historians in modern scholarship, and a substantial literature on the topic has been produced.¹ Even though there are many general theoretical issues concerning the interplay of the tribe and the state, this chapter will primarily be concerned with the following questions: how are tribes defined in terms of their relations with the states and what would be the impact of such a relationship in shaping and reshaping tribal structures?² While examining the role of the Ottoman state in defining Kurdish tribal structures between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, this chapter will demonstrate that a strong state plays a determining role in the sociopolitical configuration of tribes. Undoubtedly, the internal dynamics of tribes also contribute significantly to the process of tribal reformation. However, there are no sufficient sources to allow an analysis of the internal dynamics. Focusing instead on the state, this chapter will analyze the impact of the Ottoman administration in the new configuration of the Kurdish emirates. It will be shown that at the level of an emirate, a strong state exercises a greater authority than it does on the tribal level and the Ottoman state was actively involved in and primarily responsible for the process of Kurdish emirate formation. In demonstrating these claims, the present chapter aims at surveying Turkish-Kurdish relations in the Ottoman period, prior to the emergence of Kurdish nationalism.

Tribe, Emirate, and the Kurds

Theoretical Framework

One of the most crucial problems currently faced by social scientists is to provide solid definitions for social terms that both take indigenous categories into consideration and provide useful grounds for comparison. The

social identity of a group is such that it exhibits particularistic traits in relation to its time and place. Since group identity is closely related to culture—a multifunctional and constantly changing entity—it is impossible to find universal answers to such questions as “What constitutes group identity” and “What are the boundaries of a social group.” The term “tribe” best illustrates this ambiguity. Presently, there is little agreement among social scientists as to what constitutes a tribe.

Of the number of social theories that attempt to define the tribe, the segmentary lineage theory of the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard long enjoyed the greatest popularity.³ In the mid-twentieth century, his theory was widely used to differentiate “tribal” from “nontribal” groups and to provide a framework for meaningful comparative research. According to this theory, although tribes have chiefs, they lack an elaborately organized political system that defends its territories and enforces judicial policies (mostly by legitimate coercion). The theory claims that coercion practiced by the chief is minimal or nonexistent. In the absence of the state, a tribesman whose rights have been violated has only his kinsmen to rely on for justice. It is only the blood lineage, whether fictive or real, that gives support to one who seeks justice for his violated rights. The segmentary lineage theory emphasizes that such a need does not exist in non-tribal groups, since they are generally a part of a stronger political structure.

This functionalist approach to the tribe as a unique sociopolitical group, however, suffers from some questionable assumptions. First of all, this theory ignores the existence of external marriages that invalidate the definition of the “other” on the basis of the bloodline. Secondly, it assumes a balanced opposition among the rival branches, since they do not destroy each other. Thirdly, the segmentary lineage theory presumes that group solidarity in a given tribe is created by primordial ties among its members, and ignores the contribution of circumstantial needs such as defense and economy.⁴

In this respect, Albert Hourani’s definition of the tribe seems more satisfactory. According to Hourani, the term “tribe” can be used to indicate two kinds of social entity. The first kind is a natural phenomenon of rural society, whether pastoral or agricultural, such as the ad hoc cooperative alliances of herding units or villages. These groups cohere “because of the need for certain types of cooperation in the migration of pastoral groups, the operations of plowing and harvesting, the periodic redistribution of land, and sometimes defense.”⁵ These groups are bound together by cooperative activities, proximity, and kinship through either common ancestry or intermarriage. Hourani further suggests that “these kinship bonds arise because of the group’s isolation from others, the need to keep land in a family, or the need to establish binding personal relations with those with whom one has common interests. . . .”⁶ In turn, kinship assimilates relations of daily life and the myth of common ancestry into “warm affective and moral bonds.”

The second usage of the term “tribe” refers to larger groups that can be detected only by certain traits such as group solidarity. Hourani claims that in larger groups, kinship is replaced by common ancestry, which revolves around a myth.⁷ Due to a fictive relationship between a group and a common ancestor, many diverse groups can constitute larger and heterogeneous sociopolitical units. Yet Hourani seems to be overlooking a very important political and social organization: the confederacy, a middle layer between the tribe and the state. Hourani does not separate confederacies from tribes and refers to the former as large tribes. Yet the tribe-confederacy distinction is a vital one.

In a study that better emphasizes the importance of confederacies, Richard Tapper dwells on this distinction, claiming that the tribe is “a localized group in which kinship is the dominant idiom of organization, and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct (in terms of customs, dialect or language, and origins); tribes are usually politically unified, though not necessarily under a central leader.”⁸ The confederacy, on the other hand, is more “heterogeneous in terms of culture, presumed origins and perhaps class composition, yet is politically unified, usually under a central authority.”⁹ He further distinguishes confederacies “as groups of tribes united primarily in relation to the state.”¹⁰ The main difference between the tribes and confederacies, therefore, appears to be heterogeneity, class composition, and leadership. The confederacy is formed usually when a strong leader seeks to control a larger territory at the expense of his local competitors. To eliminate his internal rivals, the leader often allies himself with an outside power. Hence, confederacies become more receptive to a state’s control compared to tribes, since the confederacies are formed in relation to the state. The historical evidence presented in this chapter confirms the applicability of this definition.

Definition of Kurdish Tribes

Beatrice F. Manz, the author of *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, includes a chapter on Turkic tribes in which she deals with a definition of the tribe. To avoid confusion over her usage of the term, she suggests that “The historian attempting to determine what it is he is dealing with must construct as complete a picture as he can, then make his way through the controversies of the anthropologists, and finally decide on the strength of usually very meager evidence which definition best fits and explains his case.”¹¹

The very same need arises when one examines Kurdish tribalism. Defining the Kurdish tribe is a very complex and difficult task, and no clear-cut definition of a Kurdish tribe can be offered. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, it is necessary to determine what should be understood from the term “tribe” in this study, and to separate the tribe from the clan and the emirate. Available information does not permit us to elaborate on the internal dynamics of the

Kurdish tribe in the sixteenth century. Primary sources often use the term *aşiret* (Arabic, *ashira*) to refer arbitrarily to all political units—whether clan, tribe, or emirate. These sources do seem to hint that the emirate was a tribal confederacy. The distinction between the tribe and the emirate is particularly important for understanding Kurdish-Ottoman relations. Richard Tapper's definition of tribe and confederacy seems to fit best to the purpose of this work. Therefore, this chapter uses the term "Kurdish tribe" to refer to a sociopolitical entity whose group solidarity is based predominantly upon primordial relations and whose members consider themselves culturally distinct.¹² On the other hand, the Kurdish emirate or confederacy differs from the tribe in terms of its larger size and more heterogeneous culture, its presumed origin and stratified class composition, its more circumstantial solidarity, and its closer relations with the state.¹³ The Kurdish emirate is composed of a number of tribes, both nomadic and settled, and of nontribal groups who speak different dialects. The supreme leader of the emirate (*mir*) has considerable military power and lives usually in a fortified city with his entourage.

Kurdish Tribalism Prior to the Ottoman Conquest

Until the tenth century C.E., it seems that the highest social and political organization of the Kurds did not exceed the level of the emirate. However, in 959 Arab historians mentioned a Kurdish dynasty, the Hasanwahys, which established considerable dominance over the other Kurdish tribes in eastern Kurdistan around Hamadan. In 990, another Kurdish family, the Marwanids, emerged as the ruling dynasty of northern Kurdistan in Mayyafariqin (present-day Silvan) near Diyarbakır. They reigned until 1096.¹⁴ Although Kurdish in origin, the two dynasties have been regarded as Arab by scholars, since they were officially invested by the caliph and used Arabic as the official language of their states.¹⁵

The next Islamic dynasty of Kurdish origin was the Ayyubid, whose legendary ruler Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi is well known for waging war on the Crusaders. After the fall of the Fatimids in Egypt, the Ayyubid dynasty ruled the territories of Egypt and Syria between 1171 and 1260. The Ayyubids inherited a more sophisticated state structure than the Marwanids; however, they were hardly qualified to be called a Kurdish state, since their rulers never dwelled on their Kurdish origin and, despite the great extent of their borders, ruled only a small portion of Kurdish land.

The Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century had a devastating effect on the Kurdish tribes. Hülagü's army did not spare even a single tribal chief, and Hülagü replaced the massacred chieftains with his own men.¹⁶ This was a major catastrophe for Kurdish tribal structure and the authority of the tradi-

tional ruling families. Similarly, after overrunning Baghdad and Diyarbakır a century and a half later, Timur conquered most of Kurdistan, devastating the recovering Kurdish tribes. During the Timurid period, Kurdish tribes still remained weak and vulnerable.

It was during the short reign of the Qaraqyunlu dynasty in the fifteenth century that the Kurdish chieftains regained some of their former power. However, when the Aqqyunlu dynasty took over the Qaraqyunlu territories, which included a large enclave of Kurdistan, Kurdish tribes were persecuted due to their previous allegiance to the rival Qaraqoyunlu.¹⁷ Minorsky points out that the Aqqyunlu “conducted a systematic policy of exterminating the great Kurd families” and appointed their own governors.¹⁸

When the Safavid dynasty established its power under the mystical Shia charisma of Shah İsmail, the Aqqyunlu state was already declining. After proclaiming Twelver Shiism as the state religion in 1501, İsmail put an end to the Aqqyunlu state. However, his policy towards the Kurds was not different from that of the Aqqyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan. Shah İsmail, too, attempted to control the land and the tribes directly by utilizing a system of centralized power, hoping to expand toward the west. There, however, the Ottoman Empire was prepared to face the challenge.

As a result of Aqqyunlu and later Safavid policies designed to terminate the authority of the local rulers, Kurdish tribal structure seemed greatly diversified. Prior to the Ottoman expansion in the region there existed many tribes mostly nomadic ones, that were free from central control, as well as a few strong emirates in the least accessible parts of Kurdistan. The traditional Kurdish leadership was unable to fill the power vacuum caused by centuries-long instability in the region. After the Mongol invasion, no record exists of any strong Kurdish political formation, nor of a Kurdish dynasty that exercised a considerable authority in the region. No Kurdish tribe or emirate flourished and evolved into a strong political and military power, a power that could create a Kurdish state.

Ottoman-Safavid Relations and “Kurdistan”

The Ottoman Empire’s initial interest in Kurdistan came mainly from the need to defend its eastern borders against Safavid expansion.¹⁹ The main agent for this growing threat was the considerable population of Anatolian Kızılbaş (Qizilbash),²⁰ who were the ardent followers of Shah İsmail’s mystical Shia charisma. To counter this threat, the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (the Grim) organized a massive military campaign against the Safavids.

Prior to his Iran expedition, which began 20 April 1514, Selim I sent his advisor Mevlana İdris Bitlisi, an influential Kurd in the service of the Ottoman

court, to organize Kurdish chieftains against the Safavids. İdris Bitlisi succeeded in gaining the allegiance of at least twenty Kurdish chiefs. When Selim's armies came to Amid (Diyarbakır) in 1514, the Safavid governor of Diyarbakır, Muhammad Han Ustaclu, withdrew his army. The city readily fell to the Ottomans, since its inhabitants had already declared their allegiance to the Ottoman sultan. The subsequent battle of Çaldıran on 23 August 1514 ended with a complete victory for Sultan Selim over Shah İsmail, who abandoned his capital, Tabriz, to the Ottoman forces. Muhammad Han Ustaclu was killed, and a large portion of the Safavid army was destroyed. This was an overwhelming blow to Shah İsmail's military career and mystical charisma.

Returning from Tabriz, Sultan Selim ordered the killing of the Kızılbaş in Anatolia to eliminate the Shia opposition to his Sunni state. Because of logistical problems and the reluctance of the Janissaries to proceed further, the Ottoman army returned to western Anatolia and left no permanent military force behind. This decision enabled Shah İsmail to recover very quickly. As soon as the Ottomans left the city, Shah İsmail returned to Tabriz and organized a number of military expeditions to reclaim his lost domain. He first appointed Kara Bey, a brother of Ustaclu Muhammad Han, as the governor of Diyarbakır with the title han (khan) and requested Kara Bey to reestablish the Safavid rule in Diyarbakır. When Kara Han arrived at Diyarbakır, however, the Kurdish chieftains revolted and refused to surrender the city. They guarded Diyarbakır until help arrived from the Ottoman army and Kurdish tribal forces organized by İdris Bitlisi. The Safavid army retreated, and control reverted to the Ottoman Empire.

At this juncture, it is important to stress the role of İdris Bitlisi, who assembled a large Kurdish army by forming alliances among Kurdish emirates, including Çemişkezek, Palu, Çapakçur, Bitlis, Hasankeyf, Hizan, Cezire (Cizre), and Sasun.²¹ Since there have not been many occasions when the Kurdish tribes have acted collectively, Bitlisi's success in mobilizing such a large group is noteworthy. Very much pleased with the achievement of İdris Bitlisi in linking the Kurdish tribes to Ottoman rule, Sultan Selim charged Bitlisi with establishing an administrative framework for these Kurdish territories. It seems that these highly fragmented and vulnerable Kurdish tribes needed the Ottoman state for protection as much as the Ottoman state needed them as a buffer. Kurdish beys (or begs) requested through İdris Bitlisi that the sultan recognize their authority as local rulers and organize them under Ottoman protection:

When the sultan left Tabriz for the west, the Kurdish begs sent Idris to him with the demand of *recognition of their hereditary rights over their respective territories* [original emphasis], and with the request to *appoint one from their midst as the beglerbegi* [original emphasis] so that they could, under an unambiguous leadership, march together

against Qara Khan and expel him from Kurdistan. . . . The sultan then asked Idris which of the begs was most worthy of this paramount leadership. The wise Idris advised: '*They are all more or less equal, and none of them will bow his head before any other* [original emphasis]. For an effective and united struggle against the Qizilbash it will be necessary to put coordinating authority into the hands of a servant of the court, whom all mirs will obey.' Thus was done, and Biyikli Muhammmad remained behind in the east as the [Ottoman] *begler-begi* of Kurdistan.²²

İdris Bitlisi thus used his intermediary position very productively for both the Ottoman state and the Kurdish chieftains. Kurdish beys, becoming part of a larger and stronger political structure, secured and consolidated their political power over their subjects. In return the Ottoman state created a buffer zone against the Safavid threat and enjoyed a new source of tax revenue.

Initially, all newly acquired Kurdish territories to the south of Erzurum and Sivas were organized under the umbrella of the Diyarbakır *beylerbeyliği* (1515). Effectively, the province of Diyarbakır covered all major and minor Kurdish chiefdoms except for Kelhor, Erdalan (Ardalan), Baban, Şehrızor (Shahrızor), and Mukri (Mokri), which either preferred to stay with Iran or attempted to remain neutral.

Thus began a long power struggle between the two empires, a struggle that would last until the end of the Safavid Empire in the eighteenth century. After Sultan Selim's death, his son Süleyman I (the Magnificent) ascended the throne. The new sultan extended his empire's boundaries even further, and during his reign (1520–1566) the Ottoman Empire reached its peak both geographically and politically. Süleyman I also paid very careful attention to relations with Iran and organized a number of military expeditions to secure and expand his eastern frontier. Consequently, many conflicts occurred between the two rival empires over the Kurdish territories. Neither the Safavids nor the Ottomans, however, managed to control completely all the Kurdish territories. Realizing that Kurdish tribal leaders could mobilize large Kurdish forces, Shah Tahmasp I softened his policy of ruling the region directly, reversing the policies of his father, Shah İsmail. In the second half of the sixteenth century, the two empires competed for the loyalty of each other's Kurdish subjects by offering them material gains.

As a result, Kurdish allegiance to the two empires fluctuated during this century, indicating that the Kurds were not passive partners in the state-tribe interaction. The following example demonstrates how the Kurds dealt with the surrounding powerful states. The ruler of Bitlis, Şerefhan IV,²³ who originally allied himself with the Ottomans, switched his loyalty to the Safavids in 1534. The Ottoman grand vizier İbrahim Pasha ordered one of his generals, Ulema Pasha,

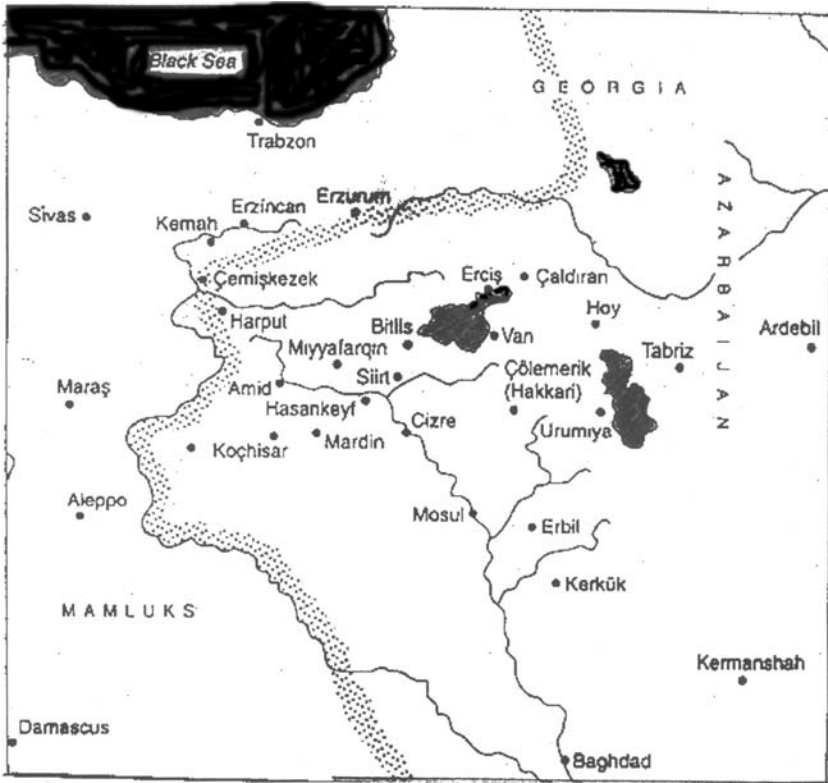


Figure3/1: The Safavid border prior to 1514 and Kurdish tribes.

to recapture Bitlis. Ulema Pasha not only retook Bitlis but also killed Şerefhan IV. The Ottoman state gave Bitlis to Şemseddin III, a son of Şerefhan IV.

While Sultan Süleyman I was preparing for his Baghdad expedition, Shah Tahmasp I attacked eastern Anatolia in 1534. This led many Kurdish emirates to switch sides again, mainly for materialistic and pragmatic reasons. Şemseddin III joined the Safavid ranks and was rewarded with the title of *han* by Shah Tahmasp I in 1535. His son, Şerefhan V, was born in Iran and was educated with the sons of Shah Tahmasp I. Şerefhan V (Bitlisi) is well known for his significant book on Kurdish history, the *Şerefname*. In 1578, the Ottoman Empire offered him the hereditary possession of the Bitlis emirate along with one-half of Muş Province. He accepted the offer and switched his loyalty to the Ottoman Empire.²⁴

Süleyman I led his army against Iran at least six times during the period between 1533 and 1554. The Safavids retrieved Baghdad several times from the

Ottomans. Peace was temporarily made in 1590, and Shah Abbas I surrendered his western provinces including Azerbaijan, Şehrızor, and Luristan, but in 1601 fighting resumed and the Safavids repossessed most of their lost provinces by 1612. Sultan Murad IV finally re-captured Baghdad in 1638. The next year the treaty of Kasr-ı Şirin (Qasr-i Shirin) was signed, and a new border between Iran and the Ottoman Empire was established. Iran remained confined to the far side the Zagros mountain chain. The Ottomans and the Safavids did not engage in any large-scale conflict during the remaining part of the seventeenth century, which enabled the Ottoman Empire to focus on integrating its Kurdish territories into the Ottoman political and administrative system.

The Ottoman administration in Kurdistan was initially flexible, with the Kurdish emirates enjoying the privileges granted to them. However, Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatname* demonstrates that by the mid-seventeenth century, the degree of autonomy in the Kurdish emirates had greatly diminished. The next section²⁵ will discuss the traditional Ottoman administration and compare it to that of Ottoman Kurdistan; and by evaluating the data from three different periods, the tightening Ottoman control over the Kurdish emirates will be demonstrated.

Ottoman Administration in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

Classical Ottoman Administration

The Ottoman Empire inherited three major traditions: Turkic, Islamic, and Byzantine.²⁶ In earlier centuries, Turkic tribes had modified their traditions to accommodate Islam. When the Ottomans finally conquered the entire Byzantine Empire, Islamic and Turkmen practices were molded into a new tradition in both the public and private spheres. Hence, local institutions and customs also became a part of the Ottoman state apparatus. As the empire expanded, administrative policies became more flexible to accommodate this extreme heterogeneity. There were, therefore, always some local exceptions to the general Ottoman administrative policies.

The Ottoman administrative system consisted of two components: the central government and the provincial administrations. In the provincial administration, administrative flexibility was the norm. The provincial government traditionally included two centrally appointed authorities to administer the district (*sancak*): the bey (also called *sancakbeyi*), who came from the military class and represented the executive authority of the sultan, and the *kadı*, who was a member of the ulema and represented the legal authority of the sultan. The latter had to be an expert on Sharia (religious law) as well as the sultan's rules (*kanun*), laid down in law books (*kanunnames*). These law books

legislated taxes, criminal law, tolls, the duties and privileges of officials, etc., and were prepared separately for each *sancak*. In addition to the *bey* and *kadı*, each district had also a mufti, who interpreted rather than executed Islamic law. Through his *fetvas* (statements regarding legal matters), the mufti declared his opinion on legal subjects. Outside the Arab provinces, the mufti typically belonged to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, to which the Ottoman ruling stratum adhered.

Several *sancaks* comprised an *eyalet* or *beylerbeyilik* (province), which was administered by the *beylerbeyi*, later also called *vali* (governor). Like the *sancakbeyi*, the *beylerbeyi* was appointed by the central government; he was also a *sancakbeyi* of the capital district in his *eyalet*. The *beylerbeyi*, who bore the title “pasha,” outranked all *sancakbeyis* in his province. He was the head of provincial administration. Except for military expeditions, however, *sancakbeyis* were directly responsible to the sultan, not to the *beylerbeyi*.

The Ottoman lands were divided into three categories: *mülk*, freehold land; *vakıf*, land granted for pious or charitable purposes which remained or was revised at the sultan’s discretion; and *arazi-i emiriyye* or *miri*, agricultural land that belonged to the Ottoman state. Revenues for the state were generated exclusively from the latter, which was organized in three types of administrative unit: *timar*, *zeamet*, and *has*. This organization was called the *dirlik* or *timar* system. A *timar* was the smallest unit and produced up to twenty thousand *akçes*.²⁷ *Zeamets* produced from twenty thousand to one hundred thousand *akçes*, and the *has* produced over one hundred thousand *akçes* as tax revenues.

Most *dirlik* holders were military men. The *timar*, village-level revenue, was given to the lowest-level military men (*sipahis*) for their service to the state. Holders of *zeamet* (*subaşı*) were generally higher-ranking officers. *Sancakbeyis* and *beylerbeyis* were granted the *has*, the largest *dirlik*. The *reaya* or peasants were assigned to a *timar*, *zeamet*, or *has*. If a peasant was cultivating the land in a *timar*, he paid his taxes directly to his *timar* holder. If his land was a part of a *zeamet*, he was responsible to his *subaşı*. Only the *cizye* (the poll tax paid by the non-Muslims) went directly to the central treasury. Every detail concerning the *dirlik* system was specified in the *kanunnames*, based on fiscal surveys. Taking the productivity of the land into consideration, *kanunnames* were prepared separately for each *sancak*.

In return, *timar* and *zeamet* holders had to maintain a certain number of cavalymen or *cebelis*, based on their incomes (specified also in the *kanunnames*), and upon request had to come under the *sancakbeyi*’s command for military expeditions. In turn, all military personnel from the entire province gathered under the *beylerbeyi*. This system was applied to the central and most European lands of the empire.²⁸

Between the territories organized as *sancaks* under direct Ottoman rule and the *dar ül harb* (the area open to holy war), there were frontier regions and

vassal states. The beys of frontier regions enjoyed greater autonomy than the beys who ruled *sancaks* closer to the Ottoman center.²⁹ In Kurdistan, a frontier region, one can observe this administrative variation very clearly.

Ottoman Administration in Kurdistan

As a frontier region, Kurdistan demanded close attention from the Ottoman Empire. Realizing the strategic importance of the region, the Ottomans aimed at integrating Kurdish tribes fully into the Ottoman system. This was not an easy task, since the Kurdish political units demonstrated complicated structures, unfavorable to any single administrative policy. There were powerful confederacies as well as highly fragmented and diffuse Kurdish tribes. To control the region optimally, the Ottoman state needed to restructure the Kurdish political groups by creating more uniform and less-threatening units. Therefore, the Ottoman Empire introduced a twofold policy in Kurdistan.

To govern the fragmented Kurdish groups, the Ottoman state introduced a “unite and rule” policy, molding them into larger and more manageable units above the tribal level. In so doing, the state needed the Kurdish nobility who claimed legitimacy by tracing their origin back to the Arabs.³⁰ In contrast to the Safavid and Aqqyunlu rules, the Ottomans supported and consolidated the traditional Kurdish ruling stratum in their attempt to reestablish their faded authority over the fragmented Kurdish tribes. This can be best illustrated by an imperial decree (*ferman*) issued by Süleyman I that regulated Ottoman policy in the Kurdish territories. Defining the privileges granted the Kurdish rulers, this decree represents overall Ottoman governing strategy in Kurdistan in the sixteenth century.

[Kanuni Sultan Süleyman] gives to the Kurdish beys who, in his father Yavuz Sultan Selim’s times, opposed the Kızılbash and who are currently serving the State (Devlet) with faith, and who joined specifically in the Serasker sultan İbrahim Pasha’s Iran expedition with courage—both as a reward for their loyalty and courage, and their application and requests being taken into consideration—the provinces and fortresses that have been controlled by each of them as their *yurtluk* and *ocaklık* since past times along with the places that were given to them with separate imperial licenses (*berat*);³¹ and their provinces, fortresses, cities, villages, and arable fields (*mezraa*) with all their harvest, under the condition of inheritance from father to son, are also given to them as their estate (*temlik*).³² There should never be any external aggression and conflict among them. This glorious order (*emr-i celile*) shall be obeyed; under no condition shall it be changed. In case of a bey’s death, his province shall be given, as a whole, to his

son, if there is only one. If there is more than one son, they (the sons) shall divide the province contingent upon mutual agreement among themselves. If they cannot reach any compromise, then whoever the Kurdistan beys decide to be the best choice shall succeed, and through private ownership (*mülkiyet*) he shall be the holder (*mutasarrıf*) of the land forever. If the bey has no heir or relative, then his province shall not be given to anybody from outside. As a result of consultation with the Kurdistan beys, the region shall be given to either beys or *beyzades* [someone else from the beys family] suggested by the Kurdistan beys. . . .³³

The precise date of this decree is not clear, but given the fact that it was issued after İbrahim Pasha's Iran expedition, it must date from around 1533.³⁴ In it Süleyman I clearly demonstrates his preference for preserving and consolidating the political power of the Kurdish nobility, whose authority was seriously damaged by the hostile policies of the Aqqyunlu and later the Safavid empires. Hereditary succession was granted to the Kurdish beys loyal to the Ottoman state, an exceptional privilege in the Ottoman administration. The Kurdish chieftains were thus granted relative autonomy within the empire.

The Ottoman state was extremely careful to ensure that power remained in the hands of the same ruling families. This policy was apparently aimed at creating strong leadership free from the challenges of other internal rivals. In no case was the leadership allowed to go to anyone outside of the ruling dynasty. If the bey had no son to succeed him, then the other beys of Kurdistan would nominate the successor, probably a person from a different branch of the same family. It is noteworthy that the sultan did not favor non-Kurdish rulers. As a result of this policy, however, most Kurdish *mirs* became heavily dependent upon Ottoman assistance to maintain their position of power, and the Ottoman state found a favorable environment in which to interfere with the Kurdish tribal structures. State coercion and the powerful myth of the prestigious descent of the ruling families redefined group solidarity and constituted an excellent example of circumstantial group solidarity. Strictly in this sense, some Kurdish emirates seem to be state creations, since they were united in relation to the state.³⁵

There existed also powerful emirates in Kurdistan posing a threat to the Ottomans. The state dealt with them very delicately. Those emirates, which were initially granted full autonomy later gradually lost most of their privileges, and in the nineteenth century the last Kurdish emirate, the Botan, was fully integrated into the Ottoman system. In the seventeenth century, however, some powerful emirates that exercised autonomy still existed, although the degree of autonomy was greatly diminished compared to what it was in the early sixteenth century.

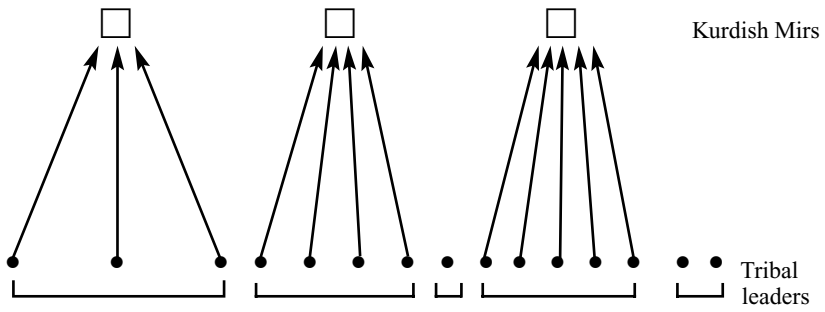


Figure 3/2: Kurdish tribalism prior to Ottoman control

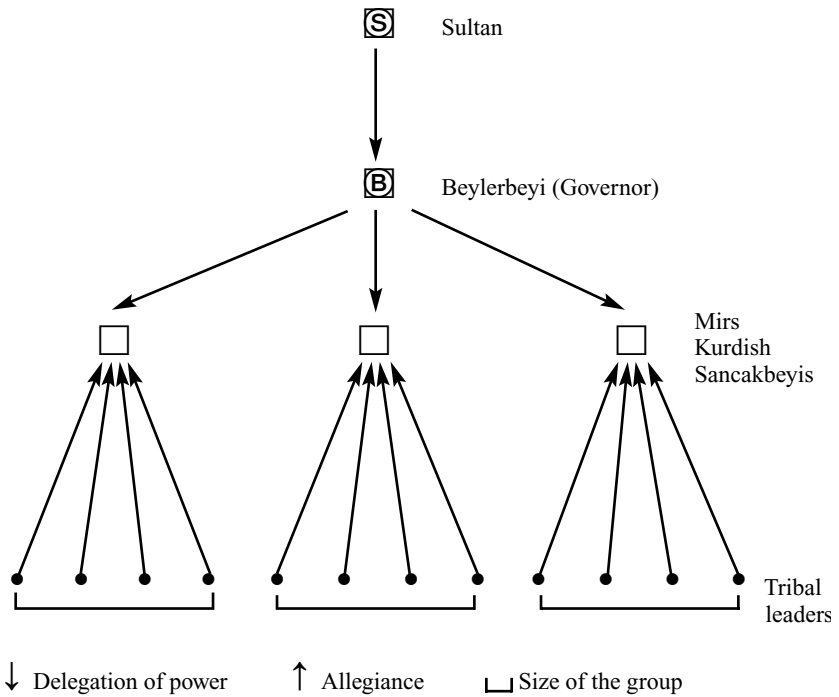


Figure3/3: Kurdish tribalism under the Ottomans in the sixteenth century. Cf Bruinessen *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 194.

The history of the Çemişkezek emirate illustrates the gradual increase in the Ottoman penetration of the Kurdish emirates. Hacı Rüstem Bey, who sided with Shah İsmail, was executed by Selim I. The emirate was ruled temporarily by a centrally appointed governor until Pir Hüseyin, the son of Hacı Rüstem, made his submission to the Ottoman throne. Consequently, he became the new autonomous ruler. During his rule, Çemişkezek flourished and became one of the most powerful Kurdish emirates. When Pir Hüseyin died, however, Sultan Süleyman intervened in the succession and had a fiscal survey made. As a result, he divided this autonomous emirate into two Kurdish *sancaks* (Mıdıgerd and Pertek) and fourteen *zeamets* and *tımars*. Süleyman I granted each of Pir Hüseyin's sixteen sons a *tımar*, *zeamet*, or *sancak*. The remaining land was transferred to the central treasury. When, however, the three youngest sons, who had received moderate fiefs, grew up, the sultan converted the land that was originally taken from Çemişkezek to a *sancak* (Sakaman) and granted it to one of the three youngest sons. The other two also enjoyed larger *zeamets*. As a result, Çemişkezek was divided into more manageable units, yet still maintained a degree of autonomy. These new Kurdish *sancaks* of Çemişkezek (Mıdıgerd, Pertek, and Sakaman) were quite different from the regular Ottoman *sancaks*. First, in contrast to the regular Ottoman practice, which allowed only Ottoman military personnel to receive such assignments, *tımars* and *zeamets* in Çemişkezek were granted to the Kurdish *mirs* or the members of the ruling family. Secondly, all offices, whether connected to *tımars* or *sancaks*, were filled on the basis of hereditary succession.³⁶

To govern the disparate Kurdish tribes, Ottoman administration in Kurdistan varied greatly. The degree of autonomy granted to the Kurdish emirates was based primarily, but not entirely, upon the accessibility of the land, the degree of geopolitical significance, and the internal strength of a Kurdish tribe (or confederacy). The least powerful tribes were either forced to join more powerful ones or to become a part of the regular Ottoman *sancaks*. The most powerful and least accessible tribes—those located close to the Iranian border—were enjoyed the highest degree of autonomy.

A *kanunname* mentioned by Evliya Çelebi, but not dated, best illustrates this arrangement. Referring to the *kanunname*, prepared for the *eyalet* of Diyarbakır, Evliya Çelebi specifies two different types of administrative unit besides the traditional Ottoman *sancak* in Diyarbakır: (1) Kurdish *sancaks* (*Ekrad Beyliği*) and (2) Kurdish *hükümet*s (governments).³⁷ Kurdish *sancaks* were given to the Kurdish rulers as *yurtluk ve ocaklık*, which denoted that succession to the office would remain within the family and the ruler would not be deposed by the sultan or any other Ottoman authorities. The Kurdish *sancaks*, like ordinary *sancaks*, contained the *tımar*, *zeamet*, and *has*, whose holders, Kurdish tribesmen, were subject to the same military obligations as those in the rest

of the empire. The state made fiscal surveys in Kurdish *sancaks*, which suggested that some of their revenues went to the central treasury.

The second kind of administrative variation in Kurdistan, *hükümet*s, enjoyed the highest degree of autonomy. They were generally located in the most inaccessible territories. The state preferred not to interfere in their succession and internal affairs, and contented itself with recognizing the authority of the rulers. The sultan issued official diplomas of investiture to show his approval. The *hükümet*s did not have the *timar*, *zeamet*, or *has*. They neither paid taxes to the Ottoman state nor provided regular military forces to the *sipahi* army.³⁸

This administrative structure was widely applied in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, but available documents suggest that the degree of autonomy granted to the Kurdish emirates diminished considerably. The Ottoman state gradually intensified its control over the Kurdish groups and interfered with their internal affairs. By the time Evliya Çelebi visited the region, no longer were there Kurdish emirates that fit the description of the *hükümet*. While some Kurdish groups gained more autonomy over time, by the end of the seventeenth century none of them was as autonomous as the *hükümet*s once had been. The next section demonstrates how the Ottomans gradually increased their control over the Kurdish tribal structures.

Decreasing Level of Autonomy

The earliest available information³⁹ concerning the administration of Diyarbakır comes from the first tax register (*defter*) of Diyarbakır and dates back to 1518.⁴⁰ According to the register, Diyarbakır consisted of twelve centrally governed *sancaks*: Amid (capital *sancak* of Diyarbakır), Mardin, Arapkir, Kiğı, Harput, Ergani, Siverek, Sincar, Ruha (Urfa), Bire, Çemişkezek and Çermik. The *defter* mentions no Kurdish chiefdoms obligated to pay taxes (except in case of a weak emirate such as Çermik, and Çemişkezek, which was administered temporarily by a centrally appointed governor, as mentioned above).⁴¹ This seems to indicate that the Kurdish tribes enjoyed a high degree of autonomy as of 1518.⁴²

During the reign of Süleyman I (1520–66), due to the gradual consolidation of the new land on the eastern frontier, several new *eyalets* were formed. Many *sancaks* that originally belonged to Diyarbakır were transferred to the other *eyalets*, and by the time of Süleyman I's death (1566) the new *eyalets*, formed partly or entirely from the Kurdish territories, were as follows: Dulka-dir (1522), Erzurum (1533), Mosul (1535), Baghdad (1535), Van (1548), and Şehrızor (Shahrzör) (although captured in 1554, when it became an *eyalet* is not known).⁴³

Almost a decade after the first *defter* of Diyarbakır, the Ottoman sources give relatively more detailed information regarding the administrative arrangement of the Kurdish emirates.⁴⁴ A *defter*⁴⁵ dating back to 1527 makes a clear distinction between the directly and indirectly governed parts of Diyarbakır. The former consisted of ten *sancaks*; whereas the latter (called *vilayet-i Kürdistan*) included seven major and eleven minor emirates.⁴⁶ All registered Kurdish emirates were called *eyalet* in a complementary *defter* as an indication of autonomy. The rulers of the seven major emirates were referred to as the “great rulers” (*ümera-i izam*). The fact that more Kurdish emirates began appearing in the Ottoman documents implies that the state exercised more authority to monitor the Kurdish groups and initiated the process of integration.

Citing one of Süleyman I’s *kanunnames*, Evliya Çelebi states that Diyarbakır was divided into nineteen *sancaks*.⁴⁷ An additional five *sancaks* were regarded as *hükümete*s in which all the revenues belonged to the hereditary Kurdish bey. According to the *Seyahatname*, twelve of nineteen *sancaks* were “regular” Ottoman *sancaks*; that is to say, they contained *tumars* and *zemets* and their beys were appointed directly by the sultan. These *sancaks* were: Harput, Ergani, Siverek, Nusaybin, Hasankeyf (or Hisn-i Keyf), Çemişkezek, Siirt, Mayyafariqin (Silvan), Akçakale, Habur, and Sincar. Although Evliya gives the number of these *sancaks* as twelve, he names only eleven of them. The other eight *sancaks*, referred to in the Ottoman documents as Ekrad Beyliği, (Sağman, Kulp, Mihraniye, Tercil, Atak, Pertek, Çapakçur and Çermik) were granted to the Kurdish beys as *yurtluk* and *ocaklık*, denoting that the succession in these *sancaks* was hereditary, but, unlike *hükümete*s, they had to pay taxes and to provide military forces to the state upon request. The Kurdish *hükümete*s listed in the *Seyahatname* were Cizre, Eğil, Genç, Palu, and Hazo.⁴⁸ A similar administrative arrangement was later applied in all Kurdish territories. The *Seyahatname* suggests that the *eyalet* of Van was formed of thirty seven *sancaks* by the law of Süleyman I. The actual date of this *kanunname* is not clear. Since the major Bitlis emirate was not mentioned in the *kanunname* of Diyarbakır, the possibility remains that the document was issued after the Bitlis emirate was transferred to Van Province in the second half of the sixteenth century.

While the document of 1527 refers to Kurdish emirates as *eyalets*, in the late sixteenth century the Ottoman sources mention them as Ekrad Sancağı (Kurdish *sancak*) and *hükümet*, terminology that implies less autonomy. By the end of the seventeenth century, Kurdish *sancaks* and *hükümete*s still enjoyed a privileged status compared to the regular Ottoman *sancaks*. An interesting document written in 1632–3⁴⁹ by Aziz Efendi⁵⁰ portrays the increasing dissatisfaction of the Kurdish rulers with the encroachment upon their privileges by the Ottoman provincial governors. Aziz Efendi in his *Nasihatname* (Treatise of advice) very diplomatically warns Sultan Murad IV that this would result in losing the Kurds to the Safavids.⁵¹

Evliya Çelebi's account of the *hükümet*s in the mid-seventeenth century indicates that most of the *hükümet*s lost a great degree of autonomy. Although still *hükümet*s, they became more responsive to the state's demands and standard regulations. When dissatisfied, the state intervened politically and militarily and replaced the ruler with another from the same family. Evliya Çelebi's experience in Bitlis vividly illustrates the state's increasing control. When Evliya visited Bitlis, the emirate contained 13 *zeamets* and 124 *tımars* given to the tribal men along with the *alaybeyi* (cavalry commander), *çeribaşı* (troop commander), and *yüzbaşı* (captain).⁵²

Another example of the increasing state interference was the removal of the hereditary ruler of Bitlis, Abdal Han, from power. Evliya strikingly narrates how the *beylerbeyi* of Van, Melek İbrahim Pasha, organized a military expedition to Bitlis and replaced Abdal Han with his son, Ziyaeddin.⁵³ Bitlis thus was reduced to a Kurdish *sancak* despite the fact that earlier Evliya Çelebi mentioned it as a *hükümet*.⁵⁴

Although by the end of the seventeenth century there were autonomous Kurdish emirates, they were, for the most part, integrated into the Ottoman administrative system by increasing state authority. The Kurdish emirates received help in preserving and maintaining their infrastructure, but, the degree of autonomy they enjoyed was reduced to the point that a majority of the emirates became very responsive to Ottoman demands.

Ottoman Administrative Policies in Nineteenth-Century Kurdistan

This administrative structure was kept—at least in theory—until the mid-nineteenth century. Although the Ottoman state oversaw the function of the Kurdish emirates, organized as districts or *sancaks*, Kurdish rulers enjoyed de facto autonomy, particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the strong emirates were almost in complete control of their own internal affairs, paying only lip service to Istanbul. It is an error to think, however, that they were powerful enough to challenge the Ottoman state. The Ottoman central administration did not seem to be bothered by this arrangement. After all, the Kurds were still loyal to the Ottoman state and provided some income and men power to defend the borders of the empire. However, the Ottoman provincial administration, headed by *valis* (governors), did not readily accept what they saw as a challenge to their authority in the region. Nevertheless, they were not in a position to convince the central government to mobilize substantial military power against these emirates. A perfect example of this is the Botan emirate in the early nineteenth century. Headed by Bedirhan, who also carried the Ottoman title of *mütesellim* (tax collector), the Botan emirate functioned, for the most part, autonomously. Bedirhan established a statelike

administration in his emirate, making all the appointments for the local posts from among his own men. Technically, however, his emirate fell under the jurisdiction of the governor of Diyarbakır. A new administrative arrangement proposed by the governor of the neighboring Mosul province, Mehmet Pasha, paved the way for a revolt by Bedirhan in 1847, a revolt that had a very significant effect on future Kurdish movements and on the Ottoman policies in Kurdistan. According to the new system, the Botan emirate would remain in Diyarbakır Province, but Cizre, a subdistrict in the Botan emirate and the seat of the Bedirhan administration, would be attached to Mosul, whose governor, Mehmed Pasha, was at odds with Bedirhan for some time. Although it was not without difficulty, a heavily armed Ottoman military was successful in crushing the revolt. Bedirhan surrendered to the Ottoman forces and was sent to Istanbul in 1847.

The Bedirhan revolt was exclusively a response to the Ottoman recentralization policies. In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was going through a process of reformation. In order to face the challenge posed by the West and to meet the financial responsibilities that such an overwhelming restructuring required, the state was desperate to find extra income. Because military conquests, which were the means of Ottoman prosperity in earlier periods, were virtually nonexistent, the most logical way to fill the central treasury was to introduce a centralization policy through which the state would collect taxes directly. This, of course, meant diminishing or destroying the existing power structure, which favored the local Kurdish rulers. Moreover, the Ottoman centralization also allowed local Ottoman administration to get back at those Kurdish subjects, whose loyalty they did not trust.

To accomplish this, the central Ottoman government introduced a new administrative formation. An Ottoman *irade* (imperial order) of 1846 speaks of the creation of the province of Kurdistan. It establishes a new administrative unit and calls it Kürdistan Eyaleti. However, this jurisdictional restructuring was aimed solely at establishing direct central rule; it was not an acceptance of the existence of Kurdistan as a political entity. The *irade* contains a letter from the office of the grand vizier (*sadaret arzısı*) on 6 May 1846 that reads:

The commander of the Anadolu army, illustrious Müşir Pasha, had some observations regarding the future of the Kurdistan region, which was saved—perhaps reconquered—from brigands (*eşkiya*). To present the requirement to, and to request permission from, the Sultan, two days ago his excellency Serasker Pasha, Fethi Pasha, the above-mentioned Müşir Pasha, Nazır Efendi, and the undersecretary met in the grand vizier's Residence (*Bab-ı Ali*). Müşir Pasha firstly stated that the village of Harput, . . . although it is a suitable place to station the army, is peripheral to the headquarters of the army. On the other hand,

Ahlat—which is located on the other shore of Lake Van, and has suitable weather and fertile soil, and is located at the center of the Imperial Army (*Ordu-yu Hümayun*)—is, unlike Harput, close to the Iranian and Russian borders. Ahlat provides better transportation and logistical support and is located in the heart of Kurdistan, where the Kurds can be better controlled with the iron fist (*pençe-i satvet*), which proves to be necessary. Therefore, it is suggested to the exalted Sultan that Ahlat should become the headquarters of the Anadolu army. The appropriate action should be taken pending the Sultan’s approval. . . .

The second point of Müşir Pasha was related to the administrative structure of Kurdistan. According to the pasha, the Kurdistan region was conquered to provide security and order to the region. Diyarbakır province (*eyalet*) and Van, Muş, and Hakkari districts (*sancak*) and Cizre, Botan and Mardin sub-districts (*kaza*) should be united under the name of *Kürdistan Eyaleti* [emphasis mine], which should be granted a *special status* and *autonomy*; [emphasis mine] (*idare-i mahsusa ve müstakil tahtına konulması*). Authority should be granted to a shrewd and knowledgeable person. . . .⁵⁵

In response to this request the sultan stated his approval; “It is approved that for the welfare of the local people and to protect the public order and security, the suggested region should be united under a new province and shall be called ‘Kürdistan Eyaleti.’”⁵⁶

This document is significant for several reasons. First, it documents that the Ottoman Empire established an administrative unit and called it *Kürdistan Eyaleti*, a term that became almost extinct in the Republican period. Hence, Kurdistan, for the first time in Ottoman history, became a province with administrative borders rather than a mere “geographical expression,” as was Italy before national unification in the nineteenth century.

Second, *Kürdistan Eyaleti* was unique in that it was granted special status and autonomy. Unfortunately, the document does not specify what kind of autonomy it was given. It seems that bureaucrats and governors were picked from the most experienced civil servants and enjoyed higher salaries than their peers in other parts of the empire. The latter part of the same document deals with administrative arrangements and appointments to this newly created province, and this section suggests that “based on its large size (*cesamet*) and its importance to the official duty (*memuriyet*) Kurdistan should receive 80,000 *kuruş* [piaster] and Mosul 67,500 *kuruş* from the central government.”⁵⁷ Considering that Mosul, a very significant province, was receiving only 67,500 *kuruş* from the government, it becomes obvious that Kurdistan enjoyed special privileges and was a large province.

This *irade* also demonstrates that the Ottoman state created “Kurdistan Province” mainly for reasons concerning the positioning of the military to oppose Russia and Persia. Having a strategic base at the corner of the Persian and Russian empires must have seemed to be a very compelling reason for the Ottomans to create Kurdistan Province. Moreover, to counter any future Kurdish insurgency and to control the region directly—away from the influence of the local rulers—was another noteworthy reason for the establishment of Kurdistan.

The Devlet Salnames (State yearbooks) between 1847 and 1867 testify that Eyalet-i Kürdistan was indeed established and ruled directly by the central government. Ottoman *irades* also contain very rich material regarding the interaction between the state and the province. These primary documents suggest that the Kurdistan province ceased to exist in 1867. In the Devlet Salname of 1867, the name “Kurdistan” was crossed out and replaced by “Diyarbakır.”⁵⁸ After 1867 Kurdistan was not referred to as an *eyalet* but was used as a geographical expression again. I was not able to locate the corresponding *irade* concerning the elimination of Kürdistan Eyaleti; it is likely that this document has not yet been cataloged. We know, however, that from 1864 on, the Ottoman *eyalets* went through a process of reorganization.⁵⁹ Even before this date, there were adjustments in the administrative borders of Kurdistan. Although the reasons for the reorganization of Kürdistan Eyaleti is understandable and was a part of an empire-wide process, why the name Kurdistan was dropped in favor of Diyarbakır is not known. An interesting point is that in 1867 or 1868 (1284) Kurdistan and Memaretülaziz were combined and the name changed to Diyarbakır Vilayeti.⁶⁰ For an unknown reason, the Ottoman state felt a need to remove the name “Kürdistan” from its official records. No record in the Ottoman sources indicates that the state was suspicious that the official recognition of Kurdistan could endanger the territorial unity of the empire or provoke unwanted political desires on the part of the Kurds. Nevertheless, Kurdistan was monitored closely, for it was situated on the border of Russia and Iran—traditional rivals of the Ottoman Empire.

Year	Name of the Governor
1847–50/1264–67	Müşir Esat Pasha
1851/1268	Müşir Abdi Pasha
1852/1269	Vezir Ragıp Pasha
1853–54/1270–71	Vezir Hamdi Pasha
1855–56/1272–73	Vezir İzzet Pasha
1857/1274	Vezir Hurşid Pasha
1858/1275	Müşir Hacı Kamili Pasha
1859/1276	Müşir Mahmud Pasha
1860–61/1277–78	Vezir Ali Rıza Pasha

1862–63/1279–80	Müşir Halil Kamili Pasha
1864–66/1281–83	Müşir Mustafa Pasha
1867/1284 together with the Memaretül <i>Aziz eyalet</i>	Müşir Mustafa Pasha

Figure 3/4: The list of Kurdistan governors.

Source: Devlet Salnames 1847/1263–1867/1284.

The Devlet Salnames show that the Ottoman state appointed well-known and able administrators to Kurdistan and frequently experimented with new administrative structures. The *salname* of 1847 (1264) documents that the first governor of the Kurdistan Province was Müşir Esat Pasha. The *salname* of the following year records Van, Muş and Mardin as subprovinces (*elviye*) of Kurdistan (p. 81). This list was expanded in 1849 to include Hakkari, Dersim, and Diyarbakır (p. 45). These yearbooks also yield the names of lower-ranking governors in subdistricts, which were formerly governed by the Kurdish nobility. Interestingly, some subgovernors (*kaymakam*) of these *sancaks* with overwhelming Kurdish population carried the title of pasha, the highest rank in the Ottoman military class.⁶¹ Surely these governors were different from those of the earlier Kurdish nobility, some of whom also carried Ottoman titles such as *sancakbeyi* or *mütesellim*. However, none had the ranking of pasha while in Kurdistan.⁶² Even a brief examination of the Devlet Salnames in the second half of the nineteenth century should dispel any doubt about the Ottoman determination to break the traditional power structure in Kurdistan and to implement the almost unprecedented policy of governing the region without delegating any authority to the traditional Kurdish ruling families. As will be discussed in the fifth chapter, as the empire failed to fill the power vacuum in Kurdistan and to competently implement and enforce the new structure, due partly to the wars with Russia, a new generation of Kurdish leaders emerged and led the Kurds into the twentieth century.

Conclusion: Consequences of Ottoman Rule

Since the sixteenth century many Kurdish (mainly Sunni) groups recognized Ottoman sovereignty, and Ottoman policies in Kurdistan subsequently affected the internal dynamics of Kurdish society. The consequences of Ottoman administrative practices in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries in shaping Kurdish tribal structure were threefold. First, they affected the supreme leadership of the emirate. After the destruction of the Aqqyunlu state, the Safavid shah, İsmail I, controlled most of the land inhabited by the Kurds. Shah İsmail's policy towards the Kurdish tribes was similar to that of the Aqqyunlu

ruler Uzun Hasan. They both attempted to eliminate Kurdish chieftains and appoint their own men as local rulers. If they chose to leave some power to the local people, it was not the traditional ruling families to whom that power was granted, but instead their rivals of lesser status.⁶³ On the other hand, when expanding its eastern border to include Kurdish territories, the Ottoman state preserved and consolidated the power of the traditional local rulers. Since the state recognized and consistently supported the hereditary succession of a given family, the competition for and the distribution of power were frozen, and internal rivalries were minimized.⁶⁴ This eventually paved the way for the formation of stronger Kurdish leadership whose authority depended considerably upon the state's patronage.

Second, they affected the social classes in the emirates. As Tapper points out, one of the distinctions between a tribe and an emirate is the latter's more elaborate stratification. Traditionally, two main social groups, tribal and non-tribal, existed in Kurdistan. The tribal Kurds of the emirate constituted the military force and considered themselves the most noble group. Nontribal groups who were subjected to the tribes and were the main source of revenue included non-Muslim groups (mainly Jacobite and Armenian Christians), and nontribal Kurds (peasants and urban Kurds). This does not mean all non-Muslim groups and settled Kurds were nontribal. Şerefhan supplies us with information concerning Christian (Nestorian) tribes as clients of the Hakkari emirate.⁶⁵ The *timar* system implemented by the Ottoman government seems to have contributed greatly to an elaborate social stratification, as Evliya Çelebi's account of the Bitlis emirate clearly shows. At the top of the Bitlis emirate were the *mir* and his family, followed by the other tribal leaders and notables. The next level down was the nontribal elite consisting of religious dignitaries and high-ranking bureaucrats paid by the bey. The military class was composed of two groups: those with and without horses. The elite horsemen, *cebelis*, were selected by *dirlik* holders who were mainly the tribal leaders of the emirate. The remaining cavalry included *nöker*, slave soldiers. Their origin is not clear from Evliya's account, but they formed the military class.⁶⁶ The *reaya*, which included peasants and sedentary people of both Kurdish and Christian origin, made up the bottom of the social pyramid.⁶⁷ As Richard Tapper suggests, this kind of elaborate social stratification indicates the existence of powerful political organization above the level of the tribe. Bruinessen points out the possibility that the internal organization of these emirates mirrored the structure of the Ottoman state, although on a reduced scale. Elaborately stratified Kurdish emirates clearly predate the sixteenth century; however, evidence is convincing that compared to earlier periods, the Ottoman policy of restructuring Kurdish tribes into *sancaks* revitalized the process of stratification, and paved the way for the emergence of the statelike Kurdish emirates in the following centuries.

Third, they affected change in the Kurdish sociopolitical structure that can be seen in the vague boundaries of the emirates prior to the Ottoman intervention. The *timar* system provided the emirates with more defined political and administrative boundaries. For example, when Şerefhan Bitlisi, the author of the *Şerefname*, was invited back to the Ottoman Empire, in addition to the Bitlis *sancak* the state also granted him one-half of Muş Province as his *has* and thus precisely defined the borders of his emirate.⁶⁸

In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, overall Ottoman policy to administer peripheral districts and tribal units of the empire was very similar to that applied to Kurdistan. The Ottoman administration in the Arab provinces, for example, demonstrates that the state supported the local notables, hoping to benefit from their established prestige in their regions.⁶⁹ Interestingly, while in most Arab lands the Ottoman state was imposing the *iltizam* system (tax farming), which led to greater autonomy, the *dirlik* system was introduced in Kurdistan, which led to more central control. The fact that the Kurdish notables were supported in the *dirlik* system indicates that the Ottomans were very careful in monitoring the authority of the Kurdish *mirs* in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.⁷⁰

After the seventeenth century, however, as the Ottoman state favored (willingly or not) more decentralized policies to govern the large empire, the Kurdish notables enjoyed greater administrative and political autonomy and recovered their diminished authority not only among their Kurdish subjects but also in the provincial Ottoman administration. In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, to all appearances many Kurdish local rulers reestablished their power structure in the region. Paying only lip service to the imperial capital, these tribal leaders functioned as semi-independent principalities. Among the notable ones were the Botan, the Baban, and the Hakkari emirates. As the next chapter will discuss, the eighteenth century and the first half of nineteenth century were times in which the local notables enjoyed unsurpassed political power and influence not only in Anatolia but also in Rumelia and the Arab lands of the empire.

Beginning with the reign of Mahmud II in 1808, and particularly in the 1840s, the Ottoman state reversed its provincial administrative policies and switched to a more centralized mode. As indicated earlier, to cope with the Western economic and military superiority and to counter Russian and Iranian threats, the Ottoman state went through a process of restructuring throughout the empire, including in Kurdistan. Aiming to establish direct Ottoman authority in Kurdistan, the central administration structured a supersized province and called it Eyalet-i Kürdistan, as we have described. The state now relied more on the centrally appointed administrators, not only at the level of *vali* but also even at the level of lower-rank administrators. This can readily be observed in the State Yearbooks or Devlet Salnameleri.

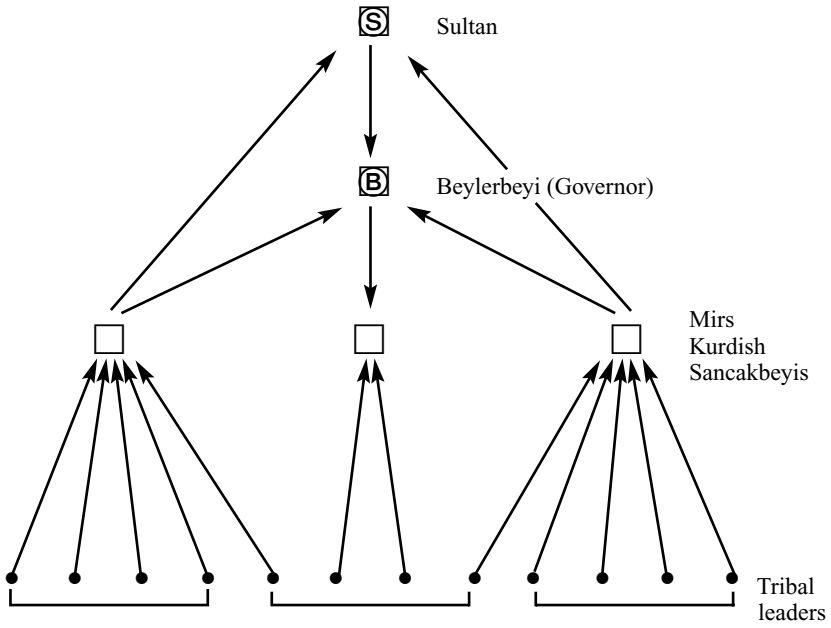


Figure 3/5: Kurdish tribalism during the mid-seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

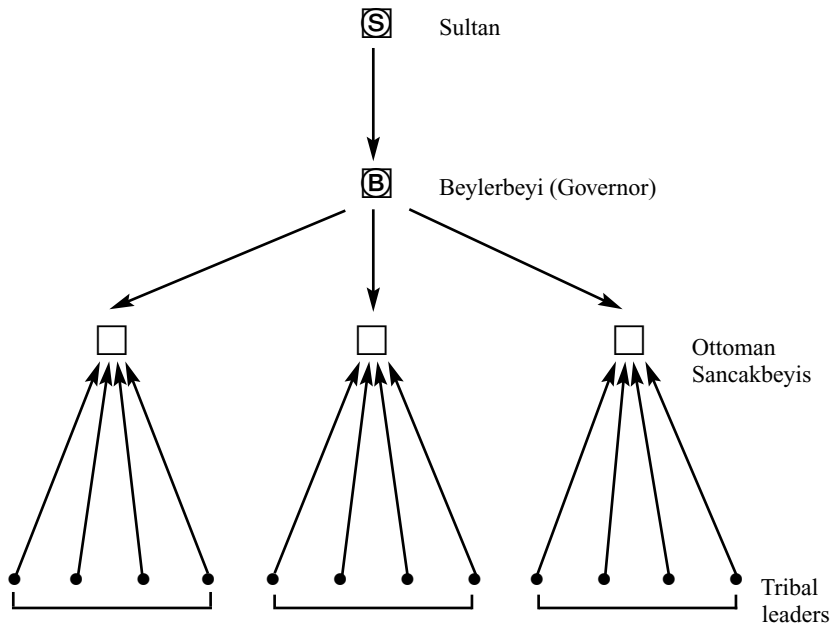


Figure 3/6: The result of the Ottoman centralization in the late nineteenth century.

Until the end of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman rulers kept a close eye on Kurdistan and never allowed a strong Kurdish principality to emerge. Instead, particularly in the Hamidian period (1876–1909), the Kurdish tribal forces were absorbed into the Ottoman military, and Kurdish nobility was for the most part resituated in Istanbul, where they could be easily watched and manipulated. Kurdish tribal forces were organized by the state under the name of Hamidiye Alayları (Hamidiye Cavalry). These forces were used even as late as the Balkan Wars in 1912–13. Sultan Abdul Hamid also established *Aşiret Mektepleri* (Tribal schools) to educate and to some extent to indoctrinate the children of minor Kurdish tribal leaders who remained in Kurdistan.⁷¹

The new Ottoman approach was implemented with some difficulty. We see far more Kurdish revolts in these centuries than before. None of these revolts, it is true, was successful in establishing a strong Kurdish principality, but obviously the Kurds were not completely passive in their relations to the states. Throughout history, Kurdish tribes have lived on the periphery of strong empires such as the Sasanian and the Byzantine, and developed their skills in dealing with the later empires, such as the Ottoman and the Safavid. In the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the Ottoman-Safavid confrontation made the Kurds realize their importance for the two empires. Switching their loyalty proved to be the most fruitful negotiating tactic for the Kurds and was the basis for their privileges. In the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, Kurds became even more keenly aware of their importance for the surrounding states. They were, however, not very successful in influencing international politics, and after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire they failed to obtain a Kurdish state of their own. The internal dynamics of Kurdish society played a large part in this failure (see chapter 5).

This chapter has focused on two controversial issues: the role of the state as an external factor in shaping and reshaping the tribal structure and the effect of Ottoman administrative policies in Kurdistan. The history of Ottoman state between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries demonstrates clearly how a relatively strong state can bring about the reconfiguration of tribal units and mold them into an emirate, a centralized confederation of tribes.

This chapter has also raised two open-ended questions regarding the later period of the Ottoman rule in Kurdistan that obviously need more focused research: What was the role of Ottoman administrative policies in Kurdistan in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism? Did the creation of Kurdistan Province in the nineteenth century affect the nationalist vision of Kurdish leaders of the next generations? *Kürdistan Eyaleti* lasted almost two decades, a time span long enough to stimulate the minds of its inhabitants. I will speculate that the Kurdistan province of the Ottoman Empire inspired the Kurdish nationalist leadership to envision Kurdistan not only as an autonomous administrative entity, but more importantly, as an independent state. After all, the Ottoman

Empire already provided Kurdistan with an administrative infrastructure, which could partly be interpreted as a blueprint for statehood. In the twentieth century, intellectual activities of the Kurds indicate the trend from Ottomanism to Kurdistanism or proto-Kurdish nationalism, and finally to full-blown Kurdish nationalism. The next chapter will examine two significant Kurdish revolts in an attempt to understand their nationalist tendencies and discuss Kurdish cultural and political societies that reflected the political and ideological transition from protonationalism to Kurdish nationalism.

Kurdish “Protonationalism”?: The Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

In the nineteenth century, nationalist movements in the Balkan provinces emerged as a significant threat to the territorial and political integrity of the aging Ottoman Empire. Balkan nationalism and its effect on the Ottoman state and on the psyche of Ottoman statesmen paved the way for unjustified generalizations for the collapse of this multiethnic empire. But although it is reasonable to think that the nationalist aspirations of non-Muslim communities, particularly those in the Balkans, contributed to the process of this collapse, it would be a mistake to think the same applies to most Muslim communities of the empire. Kurdish nationalism constitutes a prime example of how wrong this generalization would be.

Surely, Kurdish nationalists in the twentieth century made many attempts to provide their cause with historical depth by rethinking and romanticizing the nineteenth-century Kurdish movements as nationalist. However, this chapter will demonstrate that the cultural and militant activities of various Kurdish groups prior to the end of the Great War were not nationalistic. Furthermore, the present and the following chapters will clearly demonstrate that Kurdish nationalism emerged as a response to the breakdown of the Ottoman state rather than contributed to it. Therefore, this chapter suggests that one should be rather cautious in making invariable suppositions that nationalist movements by the Muslim Ottoman communities were the last strike to empire's existence.

To demonstrate this point, the present chapter analyzes the militant and political/cultural activities of the Kurds prior to the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. In order to assess the nationalist facade of Kurdish militancy in this era, let us focus on two major Kurdish uprisings in the nineteenth century, both of which played significant roles in the Kurdish nationalist rhetoric in the twentieth century. The Bedirhan rebellion of 1847 and the Şemdinan uprising of 1880–81 were the two major Kurdish movements that troubled the Ottoman state in the nineteenth century and hence have been characterized as nationalist movements by the students of Kurdish nationalism. The first section scrutinizes this categorization and arrives at different conclusions.

The second section will examine two Kurdish organizations that were established and functioned during the Second Constitutional Period (1908–20). It will show the radical shift in Kurdish political thought from Kurdism¹ to Kurdish nationalism. Placing these organizations in the political and intellectual landscape of the late Ottoman period, this section complements the previous one in examining the timing of the emergence of Kurdish nationalism and demonstrates that Kurdish nationalism as a political movement emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire became imminent.

This chapter also raises the question of categorization or appropriate terminology in dealing with the issue of nationalism in general. The term “Kurdish protonationalism” is problematic, since it implies that Kurdish activities in the pre–World War I period were destined to become nationalist. Deductive reasoning makes it very tempting to categorize them as protonationalism. However, if such categorization implies that the participants in those movements were conscious of the future repercussions of their militant and political activities, then due attention must be paid to such an unwarranted conclusion. We do not have any conclusive evidence, other than the Kurdish nationalist narratives that were produced in the nationalist period that suggests this was indeed the case. On the contrary, one can claim that the coincidence of Kurdish militant, cultural, and political activities with nationalism is a historical accident. The possibility exists that had the empire survived and recovered, Kurdish nationalism might never have emerged.

In order to set the stage for the argument, the following section will first provide background information about two Kurdish notable families and then examine the nationalist interpretation of the nineteenth-century Kurdish revolts that were led by the heads of these families.

The Nationalist Dimension of Kurdish Militancy

Bedirhan Pasha and His Revolt of 1847

The Bedirhani family produced several Kurdish nationalists after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and enjoys a special place in the grand narrative of Kurdish history. The Bedirhanis, one of the most notable Kurdish families, trace their origin back to the Umayyad general Khalid ibn Walid.² Şerefhan, a sixteenth-century Kurdish ruler, in his book *Şerefname*, the first book on Kurdish history, claims that the forefathers of the Bedirhani family practiced the Yezidi religion before Islam.³ The family belongs to the “Azizan” or “Azizi” branch of the Botan emirate in Cezire (Cizre) and was highly regarded by Şerefhan, who himself belonged to this family.⁴

Without a doubt, the most important member of the family was Bedirhan Pasha (1802/3–69/70), who became the ruler of the Botan emirate in 1835 and controlled this strong emirate in the first half of the nineteenth century.⁵ It

appears that Bedirhan's authority surpassed in many ways the authority of the Ottoman governors in the region. This, however, does not mean that the Ottoman state did not have any control of the emirate. Available evidence suggests that the Ottoman Empire was in fact responsible for installing Bedirhan in power. Two American missionaries, Wright and Breath, spent four weeks at the court of Bedirhan and said this in November 1846:

[Bedirhan] told us that eight years ago, when he was weak and Turkey strong, he entered into an engagement with the latter; and that now, though the power changed hands, he did not violate his word. . . . He is an uncommon man. Eight years ago he was poor, without power, and little known. The Turkish government then took him by the hand; and now his wealth is incalculable.⁶

In the year 1838 that the missionaries were referring to, there seems to have been an internal power struggle in the Botan emirate. We know that in 1838 the Ottoman state deployed military forces to Cizre in Botan to quell some local disturbances. We also know that Bedirhan aided the Ottoman forces in stabilizing the region.⁷ It is possible, as the missionary report suggests, that Bedirhan received aid from the Ottoman state to maintain himself as the ruler of the Botan emirate, which would indicate that the Ottoman Empire was involved in the internal politics of the emirate in the early nineteenth century. We know that the Ottoman authority in the region during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was nominal, but it was also powerful enough to interfere with the internal politics of the Botan emirate if necessary.

A loyal subject until 1842, Bedirhan seemed very agitated by the new Ottoman administrative policies in the following five years and revolted against the Ottoman state in the summer of 1847.⁸ Provoked by the centralization policies of the empire in the Tanzimat Period,⁹ this revolt caused so much chaos in the region that upon its suppression in 29 July 1847 (15 Şaban 1263), a new medal, the Medal of Kurdistan, was issued to those who had fought against Bedirhan.

The significance of Bedirhan and his revolt comes from later Kurdish claims that it was a nationalist uprising,¹¹ but Nazmi Sevgen, in a study on the Bedirhan family, has uncovered several Ottoman documents to demonstrate that this revolt was not nationalistic. The Ottoman archives indicate that Bedirhan's revolt did not stem from nationalism in any real sense of the term, but from a new administrative system enforced by the Ottoman central government that aimed at dividing Bedirhan's land and weakening his authority. According to the new system, Botan, the emirate's core territory, remained in the Diyarbakır province, while Cizre, a subdistrict, was attached to Mosul, whose governor, Mehmed Pasha, as indicated earlier, was at odds with Bedirhan. A letter dated 10 December 1842 from the governor of Diyarbakır, Vecihi Pasha to Bedirhan demonstrates this arrangement:

We have heard that there exists disharmony and quarrelsomeness between you and the governor of Mosul, Mehmet Pasha, stemming from the attachment of Cizre district to Mosul, and that you are full of anxiety [*vesvese*]. . . . As long as you serve and stay loyal to the Ottoman state, Mehmet Pasha cannot do you harm. The matter was referred to Istanbul and to the governor of Mosul, Mehmet Pasha. Hence, you should be free from such anxiety.¹²

As this document indicates, Bedirhan was agitated at the attempt to divide his emirate administratively. Similar letters in the Ottoman archives conclusively demonstrate that Bedirhan revolted to keep his emirate administratively intact.¹³ Bedirhan bore an Ottoman title, *mütesellim* (tax collector) suggesting that he himself was a part of Ottoman administration. Unfortunately, how much tax revenues the Bedirhani land generated for the state remains unknown, but the new Ottoman policies aimed at raising more income for the state. Prior to 1847, Bedirhan was loyal to the Ottomans and helped local governors to govern the Kurdish land. For this, he was a well-known and respected figure in the Ottoman provincial administrative structure. Therefore, it should not be very surprising that even after his revolt was suppressed, Bedirhan was not condemned to death, but placed on the Ottoman payroll.¹⁴

Immediately after the revolt, Bedirhan was sent to Istanbul, where he arrived on 12 September 1847 (1 Şevval 1263),¹⁵ and then to Crete with his two brothers and three children, the oldest of whom, Hamid, was eleven in 1848.¹⁶ Bedirhan remained ten years in Crete, and was instrumental in arbitrating local disputes between the Christians and Muslims on behalf of the central government. For his service, upon his return to Istanbul Bedirhan was awarded with the title “pasha” at the rank *mirimiran*¹⁷ in 1858. After seven years in Istanbul, Bedirhan Pasha moved to Damascus, Syria and when he died there in 1869–70 (1286), he had twenty one daughters and twenty one sons.¹⁸

Although Bedirhan Pasha should not be seen as a nationalist figure in Kurdish history, some of his children and grandchildren played very significant roles in the development of Kurdish nationalism (see the next chapter). Many children of Bedirhan Pasha played active roles in the Kurdish cultural and political organizations, which provided future Kurdish nationalists with an organizational structure.

The Naqshbandi Şemdinan Family and Sayyid Ubeydullah

The Şemdinan family proved to be one of the most influential and politically active Kurdish families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁹ By the 1880s, the family had accumulated a great amount of land around the Hakkari region. British archival documents indicate that Sayyid

Ubeydullah (d. 1883), the most internationally known member of the family due to his revolt in 1880 (see below), was purchasing land from the Qajar and the Ottoman states. Confirming the landowning status of the Şemdinans, a letter dated 15 July 1880 from the British consul-general Mr. Abbott in Iran reads: “I learn that [Sayyid Ubeydullah] is purchasing villages both in Turkey and Persia, which will greatly increase his influence [in the region].”²⁰ Unfortunately, we do not know precisely how much land the Şemdinans owned during this time, but we do know that it was large enough to disturb the British officers stationed in the region.²¹

What sort of income did the Şemdinans have to become great landowners? Our knowledge of the source of their income is meager; however, considering that the Şemdinans were one of the greatest Naqshbandi families in Kurdistan—if not the greatest—it is conceivable that they accumulated income from the donations of their followers. The family was also involved in the tobacco trade.²² Although it only became visible to the European powers in the second half of the 1880s, this family had enjoyed high prestige, particularly in the Hakkari region, due to its religious genealogy prior to the nineteenth century. Its *silsila* (spiritual genealogy) is that of the Khalidiyya branch of the Naqshbandi *tariqa*, and the family traces its origin back to Abd al-Qadir Gilani, a twelfth-century Baghdadi mystic and the founder of the Qadiri order.²³ The ancestry of the Şemdinans extends to the Prophet himself through his daughter Fatima.²⁴ With such a pedigree, the Şemdinans were spiritual leaders of local communities and advisors of Kurdish emirs and seemingly this spiritual leadership generated a necessary income to be a great land-owning family.

The Şemdinans emerged as political and military leaders of the Kurds in the second half of the nineteenth century and controlled a vast region in southeast Anatolia and northwest Iran. The rise of the Şemdinan family headed by Sayyid Ubeydullah in the 1870s and 1880s marks an important era, the era in which political power changed hands from tribal leaders to the Naqshbandi Şemdinan family. Until this time, the Sufi shaykhs generally functioned under a tribal leader as spiritual advisors. Although they enjoyed personal charisma and transtribal influence, the political history of the region confirms that Naqshbandi shaykhs, in addition to their religious duties, became political or military leaders with the rise of the Şemdinan family. Şemdinanlı Ubeydullah seems to be one of the first examples of such leadership.

There seem to be several reasons for the rise of the Sayyid Ubeydullah. The most important reason is the power vacuum that was created by the destruction of Kurdish tribal leadership in the nineteenth century. Desperate for income to compete with the European powers, Sultan Mahmud II (1808–39) initiated a centralizing policy to collect taxes directly from the areas controlled by local rulers. In Kurdistan, the Kurdish leadership consisted mainly of tribal chiefs who ruled over vast areas while paying only lip service to Istanbul. The

most notable of these tribal confederacies in the Ottoman Empire were the Botan, Baban, and Hakkari, all of which competed with one another. After a series of military expeditions, the Ottoman state dismantled the authority of these powerful tribes in the first half of the nineteenth century. As mentioned above, the last semi-independent emirate, the Botan, headed by the Bedirhan family, was removed from power in 1847. From this time to the outbreak of the Turco-Russian war of 1877–78, there is no record of a powerful Kurdish leader in the region. In the aftermath of this brutal war, which paralyzed the region, we see Shaykh Ubeydullah of Şemdinan filling the political and military power vacuum and assuming Kurdish leadership not only in most of Ottoman Kurdistan but also in Iran.

Primary sources indicate the power of Sayyid Ubeydullah in 1880 when he led an uprising against Qajar Persia and the Ottoman Empire. Concerned seemingly with the well-being of the Christian (mainly Armenian and Nestorian) population in the region, Britain monitored the uprising closely.²⁵ British correspondence confirms that Ubeydullah was the paramount chief of the Kurds in 1880, and his political control extended over a vast region that was formerly controlled by the Botan, Bahdinan, Hakkari, and Ardalan confederacies.²⁶

It seems that the main reason for the revolt was the promise made to Armenians after the Treaty of Berlin was signed on 13 July 1878 by the Ottoman Empire. The treaty stipulated that the Sublime Porte would undertake all necessary steps to protect Armenians against the Circassians and the Kurds (article 61).²⁷ To show his dissatisfaction with the treaty, in July 1880 Ubeydullah warned Tosun Pasha, the *mutasarrıf* (governor of a subdivision) of Başkale:

What is this I hear, that the Armenians are going to have an independent state in Van, and that the Nestorians are going to hoist the British flag and declare themselves British subjects? I will never permit it, even if I have to arm the women.²⁸

Thus, Wadie Jwaideh, the author of a comprehensive study on the Kurds, is correct when he states that “fear of the Armenian ascendancy in Kurdistan appears to have been one of the most powerful reasons behind [Ubeydullah’s] attempt to unite the Kurds” and lead them to revolt.²⁹ It should be added here, however, that Ubeydullah also publicly presented his movement as an attempt to restore law and order in the region, and he sought the support of the Christians against the Persian and Ottoman states. Ubeydullah complained that these two states had done nothing to stop aggression of rival Kurdish tribes, namely the Shekak of Persia and the Herki of the Ottoman Empire. To achieve this aim, for a short time local Christians (Nestorians) provided him with military support.³⁰

Hoping to enforce law and order in the area where he had ambitions to rule and where the Armenians were receiving from the British and French sup-

port for self-rule, Ubeydullah invaded the northwestern territories of the Qajar state in September 1880 expanding his sphere of control in the Persian territories. However, Ubeydullah’s militia, consisting mainly of Kurdish tribesmen, was easily defeated by the Qajars. Upon his return to the Ottoman territories, Ubeydullah surrendered to the Ottoman authorities in early 1881. They exiled him to Istanbul and then to the Hijaz, where he died in 1883.³¹

The Ubeydullah revolt is important not only because it demonstrates the emergence of new political leadership in Kurdistan but, more importantly, because some students of Kurdish nationalism identify this revolt as the origin of Kurdish nationalist struggle. They say this because the shaykh had demanded a Kurdish state (independent or autonomous) governed by himself.³² British documents seem to attest that Ubeydullah, from time to time, entertained the idea of separation from the Ottoman and Persian Empires. In a letter to Earl Granville, Ronald Thomson, a British officer in Tehran, writes in October 1881:

The Sheikh . . . states that he and all the Kurdish Chiefs are now agreed as to necessity of establishing *a united Kurdistan* [emphasis is mine] in order that they may be in a position to manage their own affairs without the interference of either Turkish or Persian authorities. . . . There seems to be no doubt from . . . the proclamations and correspondence which [Ubeydullah] has lately sent to various Kurdish Chiefs along the lines of the Persian border that his design is to detach the entire Kurdish population from their allegiance to Turkey and Persia and to establish under his own authority a separate autonomous Principality. . . .³³

The most convincing evidence of Ubeydullah’s “nationalist” aim comes from a letter that supposedly he himself wrote. In a letter to Mr. Cochran, an American missionary in the Hakkari region, Sayyid Ubeydullah states:

The Kurdish nation, consisting of more than 500,000 families, is a people apart. Their religion is different [from that of others], and their laws and customs distinct. . . . We are also a nation apart. We want our affairs to be in our hands, so that in the punishment of our own offenders we may be strong and independent, and have privileges like other nations. . . . This is our object [for the revolt]. . . . Otherwise the whole of Kurdistan will take the matter into their own hands, as they are unable to put up with these continual evil deeds, and the oppression, which they suffer at the hands of the [Persian and Ottoman] governments.³⁴

An immediate question that arises is the intended meaning of the phrase “Kurdish nation.” Unfortunately, we do not know what word the shaykh used that was rendered as “nation” by the translators or possibly by Mr. Cochran

himself. It is not only possible but also probable that Ubeydullah, a Naqshbandi shaykh, did not know the explosive meaning of the word “nation,” or at least the word did not mean the same thing to him that it did to Mr. Cochran. Therefore, caution should be exercised in drawing any conclusions about the nationalist intention of Ubeydullah based on this text.

Nevertheless, researchers such as Arshak Safrastian and Wadie Jwaideh seem to be convinced that Sayyid Ubeydullah sought independence and hence was a nationalist.³⁵ Relying on this letter to demonstrate the secessionist fervor of Ubeydullah, Jwaideh states that Ubeydullah’s statement “certainly leaves no doubt as to his strong nationalist sentiment.”³⁶ But certain other, primary sources contain confusing, if not contradictory, evidence about the nature of Ubeydullah’s secessionist aim. A good example of this can be found in a letter written in October 1880 by Major Henry Trotter, the British consul-general in Erzurum: “I believe the Sheikh to be more or less personally loyal to the Sultan; and he would be ready to submit to his authority and pay him tribute as long as he could get rid of the Ottoman officials, and be looked at *de lege* as well as *de facto* as the ruling Chief of Kurdistan.”³⁷

As demonstrated in this excerpt, primary sources do not consistently testify that Sayyid Ubeydullah’s movement was a secessionist one. Was it even a nationalist one? Ubeydullah entertained the idea of an independent principality, yet he was ready to settle for the recognition of his authority in Kurdistan within the Ottoman state. He wanted to be the ruler of a principality similar to those of the earlier Kurdish emirates but greater in its territory to match his influence in the region. Ubeydullah’s aim to rule a Kurdish principality similar to that of Bedirhan is evident in an earlier British report (11 July 1880) to Henry Trotter from Emilius Clayton, the vice-consul of Van:

The Sheikh [Ubeydullah] was going to send his son to Constantinople with the following proposal. He will point out the large sum paid to the Sultan by Beder Khan Bey, when semi-independent, and will offer to pay a still larger sum if his authority over Kurdistan is recognized, and his rule is not interfered with.³⁸

Although Sayyid Ubeydullah wanted to be the ruler of Greater Kurdistan and the present scholarship retrospectively labels him as a nationalist, it seems very unlikely that the participants (who at one point included some Nestorian Christians) in his revolt were motivated by nationalist designs. This revolt can simply be seen as Sayyid Ubeydullah’s demand for greater control in the region; however, it undoubtedly provided the Kurdish nationalist movements in the twentieth century with the symbol for a struggle against a dominant state.

The Ubeydullah revolt of 1880–81 seems more like a transtribal revolt than a national one. With his religious appeal as a Naqshbandi shaykh, Sayyid

Ubeydullah's authority transcended the tribal boundaries. Sayyid Ubeydullah, either directly or through his *khalifas*, spread his influence over a vast area where the Kurds were divided by their tribal loyalties but united by their respect to Sayyid Ubeydullah. Therefore, when Sayyid Ubeydullah called for an uprising in 1880, he enjoyed remarkable support from the members of the local tribes and was able to exercise political authority over a large territory that included formally powerful Kurdish emirates. In later years, the Şemdinan family, like its rival Bedirhanis, contributed greatly to the Kurdish nationalist movement.

These Kurdish revolts resulted in the exile of Kurdish leaders to Istanbul, where Kurdish notable families interacted with one another with much greater frequency than before. The cultural, political, and intellectual atmosphere of the Ottoman Empire that arose with the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 also provided Kurdish notables of Istanbul with a rare occasion to establish cultural and later political organizations, organizations that gave birth to Kurdish nationalism. At this point, let us turn our attention to two Kurdish organizations and follow the ideological shift from Kurdism to Kurdish nationalism.

A Transformation to Nationalism: Two Kurdish Cultural and Political Organizations, 1908–20

Along with Turks and Arabs, Kurds became heavily involved in establishing societies that aimed at advancing their own communal interests. For the Kurds, the era following the Second Constitutional Period can be seen as the Kurdish enlightenment since the educated Kurds in Istanbul began producing newspapers and forming cultural societies to foster camaraderie among the Kurdish elite and to rewrite their past. The underlying purpose of this cultural and intellectual activism was, for the most part, the systematic examination and promotion of Kurdish language, literature, history, and culture.

These activities also aimed at creating a form of Kurdish consciousness by educating the overwhelmingly illiterate Kurdish society. This was an ambitious task, since, for centuries, such a liberal Kurdish identity had not been established. Furthermore, members of these societies, willingly or not, brought their own biases, rivalries, and loyalties, which divided rather than united them. An examination of the literature produced by the Kurds of the era suggests that such unification was never established and that the Kurds were as fragmented as they had been before. Although the education mission only partly succeeded, and Kurdish activities were always plagued by factionalism, in the context of these societies Kurdish leaders were able to come together and discuss issues that mattered most to them.

From the declaration of the Second Constitutional Period of 1908 to the end of World War I in 1918, the Kurds formed several societies, a majority of

which stopped short of making political demands.³⁹ They could not go beyond functioning essentially as cultural clubs for the Kurdish nobility. Therefore, although these pre-1918 Kurdish societies were the prime example of the Kurdish cultural efflorescence, they should not be seen as nationalist organizations. Political organizations that pursued an openly nationalist agenda emerged only at the end of World War I. These post-World War I organizations followed a distinct nationalist program and called for Kurdish self-determination. To highlight this ideological shift, the following section will discuss two significant Kurdish societies representing the cultural and the political Kurdish organizations. The comparison is fruitful in that we can observe the critical process in which “proto-nationalism” became Kurdish nationalism.

Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti, or the Society for the Mutual Aid and Progress of Kurdistan (SMPK)

In the liberal atmosphere created by the Young Turk Revolution, the Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti (also known as Kürt Terakki ve Teavün Cemiyeti), one of the earliest Kurdish cultural organizations that brought together different Kurdish notable families, was established. Two rival Kurdish families, the Şemdinans and the Bedirhans, provided the society with the leadership.⁴⁰ The SMPK elected Sayyid Abdulkadir of Şemdinan, a son of Sayyid Ubeydullah (see next chapter), as its president for life and published a newspaper sharing the same name with the organization.

In its first article of the constitution, the SMPK declared the purpose of the society as follows:

There has been established a beneficial society [*cemiyet-i hayriye*] by the name of Kürdistan Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti to consolidate Kurdish ties [*revabıt*] with [the Ottoman state] while protecting the Constitution [*Meşrutiyet*] as the only way for progress and explaining to those Kurds who are not aware of the virtues of the Constitution [*Kanun-u Esasi*] that is responsible for the happiness of the people and also compatible with the great rules of İslam. [It shall] protect the high esteem [*mübeccele*] of being an Ottoman and strengthen the relations with the Armenian, Nasturi⁴¹ and other citizens of the Ottoman Empire. [It shall also seek] solutions to the problems amongst the tribes and confederacies [*kabail ve aşair*] by uniting them [and it shall] encourage commerce, agriculture, and education.⁴²

Obviously, this was very carefully worded to reiterate the position of the Kurds as an inseparable part of the Ottoman Empire; the Kurds, it implied, did not pursue secessionist or even autonomist policies. However, this passage may

also indicate that by desiring unification of the Kurdish tribes, the SMPK wanted to represent Kurds at large in Istanbul; hence, it wished to obtain more political leverage from the government. Good will towards the Armenian and Nasturi Christians could be a result of the liberal atmosphere of the era.

The volume of news in two daily newspapers, *Takvim-i Vakayi* and *Tanin*, concerning the SMPK indicates that the society became very active in 1909.⁴³ The SMPK was very vocal in drawing the government’s attention to the problems in Kurdistan, such as the land dispute between Armenian and Kurdish parties.⁴⁴ In addition, in the Meclis-i Vükela (assembly of the elected members), Kurdish representatives were complaining about the unequal treatment of the Kurdish provinces. For example, Mithad Bey, a representative from Van, pointed out that his province came to be known as the Siberia of the Ottoman Empire. The Dersim representative complained of the region’s underdevelopment and low literacy rate by stating that only one in ten thousand of Kurdistan’s overall population was literate.⁴⁵

Although the SMPK sought government help to address the problems of Kurdistan, for the most part it functioned as a social club for Kurdish notables residing in Istanbul. Interestingly, some of the conditions of being a member to the SMPK were to reside in Istanbul⁴⁶ and to be able to read and write in Turkish. Knowledge of Kurdish was also recommended, but if one did not speak Kurdish, one could replace it with another language. The stipulation that required literacy in Turkish, but not necessarily in Kurdish, probably indicates that the Kurdish leadership saw the society as an Ottoman, rather than exclusively a Kurdish, organization and that they wanted to be included in the new Ottoman intellectual/cultural landscape. Literacy in Turkish would also enable the members to communicate with non-Kurdish speakers of the Ottoman Empire. For example, to foster better relations with the Armenians, as stipulated in the constitution, required a knowledge of Turkish. Knowledge of Turkish may also have fostered linguistic cohesion within Kurdish society. After all, Turkish provided many of the Istanbul Kurds, who were the speakers of different Kurdish dialects, with a language in which they were able to communicate with one another.

Literacy in at least two languages and residing in Istanbul limited the membership to notables, who were already a part of the Ottoman system. We know that there were Kurdish workers, mainly porters, in Istanbul around 1909;⁴⁷ however, it was unlikely that many of these workers were literate. Although the SMPK aimed at improving the lives of the Kurds and drawing the government’s attention to the problems of the Kurds, it did not demand special political rights for the Kurds. It was a sociocultural organization that exhibited the characteristics of the “protonationalist” evolution of many ethnic groups in Europe and the Middle East. Among other cultural and intellectual activities, the SMPK published a newspaper, *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, which

printed articles in Turkish about Kurdish history and literature. Also, the society was involved in opening schools for Kurdish children in Istanbul. These were the main activities of the society, which had no nationalist dimension.

After the SMPK, several other Kurdish organizations were established, such as Kürdistan Muhibban Cemiyeti (Society for the Friends of Kurdistan) in 1912, Kürdistan Neşri Maarif Cemiyeti (Society for the Propagation of Kurdish Education) in 1910, and the Kürt Hevi Talebe Cemiyeti (Kurdish Hope Student Organization) on 27 July 1912. These were all legally established Kurdish societies that functioned in the increasingly Turkish political environment of Istanbul. From a newspaper article in 1919, we know that the Kurdish Hope Student Organization was reactivated with a pronounced nationalist agenda immediately after World War I.⁴⁸

In his memoir, Nuri Dersimi, then a Kurdish student in Istanbul, claims that the propagation of Turkism by the Committee of Union and Progress after the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 created anti-Turkish, pro-Kurdish feelings even among the most distant Kurds.

[The Turkish nationalist position that the CUP adopted after the Balkan Wars] affected the Kurdish youth [in Istanbul]. Even those Kurds who had no interest in the Kurdish cause were agitated and saw the Turks as their enemies (*Düşman*). . . . When we went to school, we would see Turkist slogans on the blackboard with large letters saying “Happy are those who call themselves Turks”⁴⁹ and “Long Live Turks.” As a response, we would have to write on the board “Long Live Kurds and Kurdistan” and “Happy is the one who says, I am a Kurd.”⁵⁰

Dersimi’s claims about the emergence of pro-Kurdish and anti-Turkish feelings that later gave birth to full-fledged nationalist movements resemble those made for Arab nationalism. It has been argued that the CUP’s Turkish nationalist program triggered anti-Turkish feelings and paved, at least partly, the way for the emergence of Arab nationalism.⁵¹ Dersimi saw the emerging emphasis on Kurdish identity as a response to the nationalist undertone of CUP politics in the early 1910s, a period in which Balkan nationalism forced the CUP leadership to reconsider the viability of Ottomanism in saving the empire.

The allegation, however, that the Kurds and the Turks saw each other as enemies should not pass without closer examination. No doubt, as the empire was crumbling, the Kurds were very concerned about their political future in the CUP regime. However, there is no supporting evidence to sustain Dersimi’s claim that the Kurds saw the Turks as their enemies or vice versa. On the contrary, prior to World War I, most Kurds still saw themselves as a part of Ottoman society. When one examines Kurdish publications of the era, one can easily see that although the Kurds were actively involved in promoting Kurdish identity and culture, they

were still Ottomanist rather than Kurdish nationalist.⁵² Dersimi, writing at a much later period in which Kurdish nationalism clashed with the Kemalist version of Turkish nationalism, seems to project his later feelings onto others.

The student society Kurdish Hope (Hevi) of 1912, along with other previous organizations cannot be seen as a nationalist association, for it did not aim at forming a Kurdish state and at propagating Kurdish autonomy or secession. It is naïve to think, however, that no one even thought about or discussed the possibility of a Kurdish state—after all, the Kurds were well aware of and in close contact with Balkan and Armenian nationalists. However, this became the main objective only of a later Kurdish society, the Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti or the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan.

Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti, or the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (SAK) of 1918

The Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan⁵³ was established during the final year of the First World War, when the defeat of the Ottoman Empire looked imminent. The Mudros Armistice, signed on 30 October 1918 between the Ottoman Empire and the victorious Allied Powers, was a death sentence for the Ottoman Empire. The elite group in the Committee of Union and Progress escaped from the empire, but secondary members of the party were arrested and exiled to Malta. The empire was in complete disarray. Meanwhile, Woodrow Wilson declared his Fourteen Points, which recommended political self-determination for all ethnic minorities.

It is against this background that the SAK was established on 17 December 1918, approximately one and a half months after the Mudros Armistice.⁵⁴ The founders of the SAK were the same Kurdish notables prominent in the earlier Kurdish organizations. Kadri Cemil (Zinar Silopi) in his memoir provides a list of the executive committee of the SAK:

The President: Sayyid Abdulkadir of Şemdinan
 Vice Presidents: Emin Ali Bedirhani and Fuad Paşa
 Secretary General: Hamdi Paşa
 Accountant: Sayyid Abdullah of Şemdinan
 Founding members: Halil Bey, Mehmet Ali Bedirhani, Mehmet Emin, Ali Efendi, Şeyh Şefik, Şükrü Babanzade, Fuat Babanzade, Fetullah Efendi, Dr. Şükrü Mehmet Sekban⁵⁵

Tarık Zafer Tunaya, a renowned Turkish historian, adds several more names, such as Hikmet Babanzade, Aziz Bey, Kamran Ali Bedirhan, Necmettin Hüseyin, and Reşit Ağa.⁵⁶ İsmail Göldaş, a Kurdish researcher, provides a comprehensive list of members, which amounts to 167 names. This list also

includes Said Nursi, who later became the founder of the Nurcu movement in Turkey.⁵⁷ There does not seem to exist any official document listing the members; however, Oğuz Aytepe, based on documents housed in the General Security Directorate Archive in Ankara (Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Arşivi), lists the names of 212 members.⁵⁸

Memoirs of prominent Kurds of the era reveal that several notable families monopolized the leadership of the SAK. These were the Bedirhanis, the Şemdinans, the Cemilpaşazades, and the Babans, all of whom were very actively involved in establishing the organization. These memoirs also show that there were bitter rivalries among these families for the supreme leadership of the Kurds. Among those, the most notable one, without a doubt, was the rivalry between the Şemdinan and the Bedirhan families. As the next chapter will show, these two families constituted the two poles or factions in the SAK.

The constitution of the SAK states that the purpose of the society is to ensure the general well-being of the Kurds (Article 1).⁵⁹ Article 4 for example, states that the responsibility of the administration (*heyet-i istişare*) is to work towards the advancement of Kurdistan and the Kurdish people (*Kürt kavmi*).⁶⁰ Contrary to the SMPK's constitution, the political position of the SAK in the Ottoman Empire is left unclear. We do not know if this ambiguity was meant to disguise its nationalist aim, or if the society originally did not develop a clear nationalist program. The fact that the SAK leaders chose to establish the society legally and to function within the Ottoman context suggests the latter might be the case, but we lack too much information to really know. However, soon the SAK was actively involved in creating a form of Kurdish identity not as part of Ottoman identity, but as separate from it.

If its constitution does not state that the SAK was a Kurdish nationalist organization, its subsequent activities and publications definitely attest to this fact. The best evidence for this statement comes from the newspaper *Jin*. This newspaper published many articles that were unmistakably nationalist propaganda. For example, in an article in *Jin*, Siverekli Hilmi addresses Kurdish youth: "The time of following others is past. . . . Work only for your own people. Do not forget that we have a language of our own, however neglected, and a rich history. Here you have a formula for independence: action and initiative."⁶¹

In addition, the political activities of the SAK members confirm that the SAK sought international assistance for its nationalist designs. For example, on 4 August 1919 the executive committee of the SAK visited the American, French, and British representatives in Istanbul to explain Kurdish nationalist aspirations in the empire. Zinar Silopi (Kadri Cemil) states:

The SAK leaders visited American, British, and French representatives in Istanbul and argued for the national rights of the Kurdish people. In a meeting with the American representative, Sayyid Abdulkadir, Emin

Ali Bedirhan, Said Nursi, and Dr. Mehmet Bey pointed out the boundaries of Kurdistan on the map and asked for alliance on the sea. Upon the reply of the American representative indicating the U.S. intention to create an independent Armenia at the expense of land called Kurdistan, Said Nursi responded, “If Kurdistan had a seacoast, you would destroy it with your naval power; but you cannot enforce such a decision in the mountains of Kurdistan.”⁶²

The threat of an independent Armenian state in Kurdistan seemed to validate the SAK activities in the eyes of the Ottoman government, since the Kurds had always been seen as a balancing power in the region against any Armenian threat to the empire’s territorial integrity. Moreover, until 1919 the Ottoman governments were not terribly bothered by Kurdish political activities. The Damat Ferit Paşa government only became concerned about the nationalist propaganda of the SAK when the Kurdish representatives sought international support for a Kurdish state in 1919. On 10 July 1919, the representatives of the Ottoman government—Avni Paşa, the minister of the Marine Department; Haydar Efendi, a former Şeyh-ül-İslam (chief jurisconsult); and Ahmet Abuk Paşa, a former minister of war—met with the SAK members Sayyid Abdulkadir, Emin Ali Bedirhan, Mevlanzade Rifat, Captain Emin, and Colonel Avni Bey. British intelligence was able to obtain information regarding the content of the meeting. A British report dated 21 July 1919 informs us that when asked to explain the SAK’s meeting with the British without the permission of the government, Mevlanzade Rifat replied:

[A]ccording to the Wilsonian principles every nationality had the right to work for their own welfare and . . . the Kurds were convinced that the only power which could assure them freedom and security was Great Britain. They had therefore considered it desirable to approach the British Authorities. [Mevlanzade Rifat] asked how it could be possible for the Turkish Government to grant any form of autonomy to the Kurds, seeing that the Turks themselves were not sure of their own future.⁶³

Noticeably, this document hints that the Istanbul government entertained the idea of granting autonomy to the Kurds. Whether the Ottoman government was serious about it or only trying to ensure the loyalty of the Kurds we do not know. But we do know that, encouraged by the Wilsonian principles, the SAK was overtly seeking independence or at least autonomy in 1919. There are scores of articles and editorials published in *Jin* that ask for independence or autonomy.⁶⁴ Therefore, unlike the previous Kurdish organizations, we can justifiably categorize the SAK as the first “nationalist” organization.

For the purpose of organizing the Kurdish segments of Ottoman society, the SAK established two more Kurdish societies: Kürt Tamim-i Maarif ve Neşriyat Cemiyeti (Society for the Spread of Kurdish Education and Publications) and Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti (Society for the Advancement of Kurdish Women).⁶⁵ Both societies were established in 1919. These organizations, however, suffered from lack of unification and, despite their stated purpose, failed to effectively reach out to Kurds outside Istanbul and mobilize them for a national movement or to elevate their lives through education and commerce. The vulnerability of the SAK to familial rivalries of Kurdish leaders in Istanbul is most evident in the split of the SAK in 1920. Polarized under the leadership of the rival Şemdinans and Bedirhans, the SAK broke up. The Bedirhanis, teaming up with the Cemil Paşazades and the Babans, established another Kurdish organization, Teşkilat-ı İctimaiye Cemiyeti (Society of Social Organization). In addition to their declared secessionist brand of nationalism, their opposition to the influence of the Şemdinan family united the leadership of this breakaway organization. After the destruction of the Kurdish principalities by the centralizing Ottoman reforms in the first half of nineteenth century, the Naqshbandi Şemdinan family exercised great authority over territories of the Baban and Bedirhan families. This preexisting enmity determined the understanding and manifestation of Kurdish nationalism. The following chapter looks into this split more in detail.

In search of the origin of Kurdish nationalist movements, this chapter has examined two significant Kurdish uprisings and concluded that Kurdish revolts prior to World War I did not have any express nationalistic design. This conclusion boldly contradicts much scholarship on the subject, which finds the origin of Kurdish nationalism in the above-mentioned Kurdish militaristic movements in the nineteenth century. Ottoman and British archival documents indicate that these uprisings were motivated by the desire of local Kurdish notables to recover or expand their control of the land.

After 1908, the Kurds, along with other communities in the Ottoman Empire, enjoyed a liberal political environment but this liberal period did not last long. After the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, the CUP leadership that ran the empire single-handedly with little or no regard to political opposition reversed the multiethnic liberalization process and put an emphasis on the Turkish elements of the Ottoman Empire. Even in this period, we do not see any express desire for Kurdish self-determination. Kurdish organizations chose to operate within the Ottoman system and preserved their decentralist/Ottomanist identity while celebrating their own communal one.

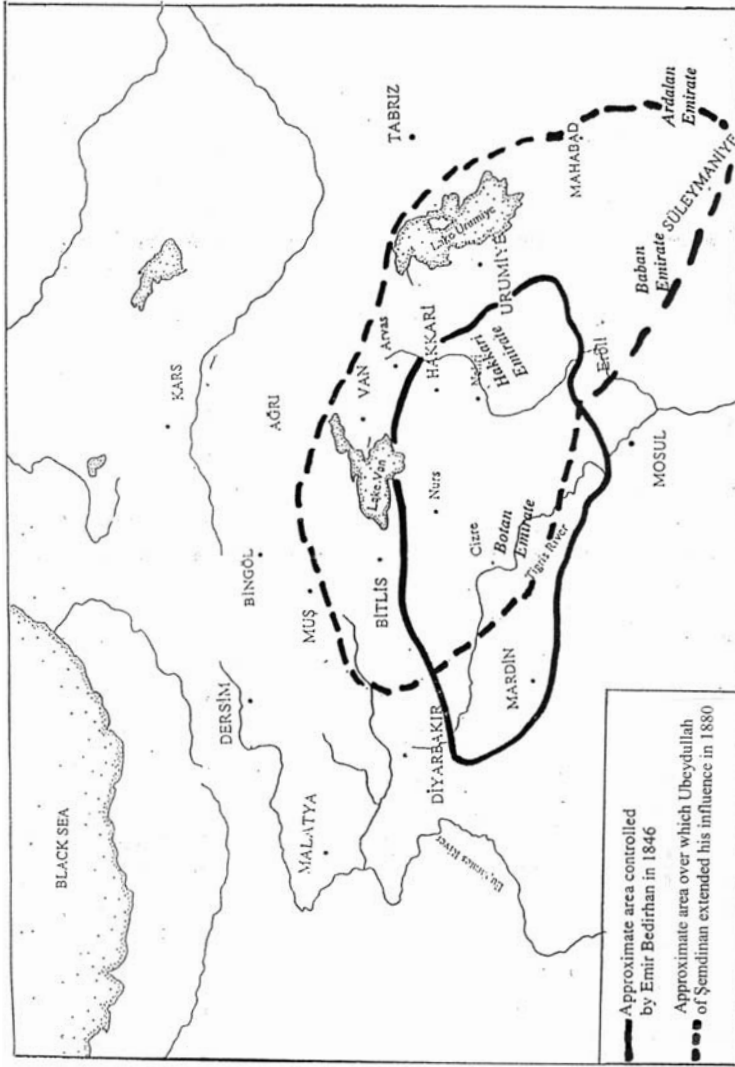


Figure4/1: Approximate areas controlled by Emir Bedirhan in 1846 and by Sayyid Ubeydullah in 1880.

The Role of Preexisting Ties and Notables in the Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism

Kurdish notables played a pivotal role in promoting the idea of nationalism in their community, and the analysis of the composition of Kurdish leadership reveals significant clues about the nature of Kurdish nationalism in its formative period. Accordingly, this chapter explores the patterns in the social, familial, and religious backgrounds of Kurdish leaders who, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, became nationalists. Searching for specific information concerning place of birth, education, knowledge of foreign languages, kinship ties, and religious (Sufi) affiliations of Kurdish leaders, this chapter makes several observations that can be summarized as the following. As already discussed in the earlier chapter, Kurdish nationalism emerged as a full blown political movement immediately after the World War I when the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist. This war had an enormous impact on every aspect of people's lives, including group solidarity. Catastrophic enough to destroy the political status quo of the world, World War I not only allowed but more importantly pushed peoples to reconfigure their political loyalties. Territorial claims for independent states for these newly configured identities emerged also in this era. It is in this era that Kurdish nationalism emerged as a full-blown political movement.

At this early stage, nationalist leadership came primarily, though not entirely, from the notables whose families once owned large estates in Kurdistan as *tımar* holders (fief holders) or *mültezims* (tax collectors). A significant portion of the notables were of Sufi, and more particularly Naqshbandi origin. A closer examination of the background of these leaders reveals that prior to their political activities as nationalist leaders, they were connected to one another through kinship ties or the Naqshbandi network. It appears that these preexisting ties and rivalries were a determining factor in their political behavior and the future of Kurdish nationalism.

To illustrate Kurdish nationalist leadership, I have selected the Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti, or Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan. Although the Kurds organized themselves in several "cultural clubs" early in the twentieth century, their organizations became political and began making nationalist

demands only in 1918 with the formation of the SAK, which was officially established on 17 December 1918. I chose this organization to represent Kurdish nationalist leadership not only because it was the best-organized and most inclusive Kurdish organization, but more importantly, its activities can clearly be defined as nationalistic, for its leaders openly asked for independence or at least autonomy. There does not exist an official membership list of the SAK, but primary sources provide us the names of founders and active members of the society.¹ The data is not perfect but it is sufficient to demonstrate the nature of early Kurdish nationalist leadership.

To emphasize better the divergent and consequently fragile nature of early Kurdish nationalist rhetoric, it is important to remember that two years after the foundation of the SAK a split occurred in the organization causing an ideological polarization among the members. This split is significant because it demonstrated the importance of kinship and Sufi ties in determining one's dedication to the autonomist or secessionist brand of nationalism. Seekers of autonomy and secession were led by Sayyid Abdulkadir of Şemdinan and Emin Ali Bedirhan, respectively. The followers of these factions cohered based upon their kinship ties, as was the case in the secessionist group, or upon their Sufi connections, exemplified in the autonomist group. In discussing the familial backgrounds, kinship relations, and religious ties of several members of the SAK, my primary aim is to discover and analyze possible patterns in the background of early Kurdish nationalist leaders. Secondly, I hope to provide the field of Middle Eastern studies with a solid case study for further comparisons and to assist attempts to discover any structural similarities among Middle Eastern nationalisms.

The Nakşibendi Şemdinan Family

Without any doubt, one of the most important and influential leaders among early Kurdish nationalists was Sayyid Abdulkadir of Şemdinan, whose father, Ubeydullah received a great deal of attention from the British in the early 1880s. I argued that Ubeydullah should not be seen as a nationalist figure. However, Ubeydullah's son Abdulkadir was unmistakably a significant personality in early Kurdish nationalism. Indeed, the biographical information about Abdulkadir provides us with data valuable for understanding the role of preexisting ties, loyalties, and rivalries at this early stage.

Sayyid Abdulkadir (1851–1925)

Abdulkadir² was born in the district of Şemdinan in Hakkari.³ He was educated in the Naqshbandi tradition in his hometown under his father's supervision. His education as an elite member of the Naqshbandi order suggests that

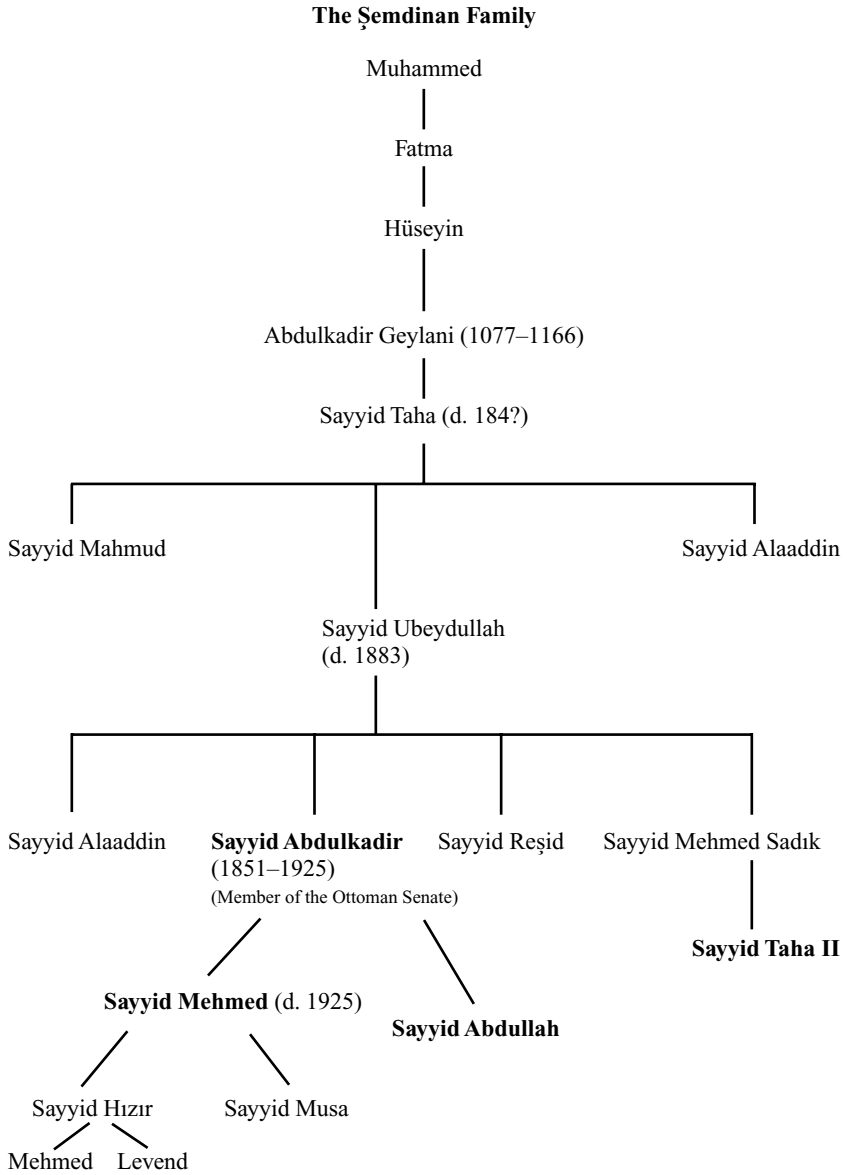


Figure 5/1: The Şemdinan Family, based on a handwritten diagram of the family tree provided by Hızır Geylan. Names in bold indicate membership in the SAK.

he spoke Turkish, Arabic, and Persian in addition to Kurdish. A letter to British authorities that was written in French and signed by Abdulkadir seems to suggest that he may have been literate in French;⁴ however, we do not know whether he himself wrote the letter in French or whether one of his associates translated it. The latter is possibly the case. Primary sources do not indicate that Abdulkadir was literate in any other European language.

Abdulkadir represented and led the autonomist faction of Kurdish leadership; hence, his position and activities in the SAK need close examination. After the suppression of his father Ubeydullah's revolt by the Ottoman state, Abdulkadir was sent to exile with his father to the Hijaz in 1881. He must have been back in Istanbul sometime before 1896, for we see his name in the list of the CUP's Istanbul branch in 1895.⁵ However, because of his involvement in a plot against Abdulhamid II, he was exiled again, this time to Mecca in 1896.⁶ It is interesting to encounter his name in the CUP, then an underground organization that worked against the sultan/caliph Abdulhamid II, because Abdulkadir himself was a part of the Ottoman religious establishment. At any rate, in 1905 Abdulkadir moved to Beirut from Mecca. After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, Enver Pasha, one of the leaders of the CUP, asked for Abdulkadir's service in convincing the Kurdish tribes to accept the authority of the CUP regime. At the meeting with Enver Pasha, Abdulkadir agreed to send telegrams to the Kurdish tribes to try to persuade them to recognize the authority of the CUP.⁷ It must have been in this period that Abdulkadir returned to Istanbul.

Sayyid Abdulkadir, upon his arrival in Istanbul, became one of the founders of the Kürd(istan) Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti (the Kurdish Society for Mutual Aid and Progress) established on 2 October 1908. Influenced by the liberal atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire following the Young Turk Revolution, Abdulkadir and other Kurdish notable families such as the Babans and the Bedirhans contributed to this urban-based cultural society, which was based in Istanbul. However, from letters in *Takvim-i Vekai*, an Ottoman newspaper, we know that this organization was also active in the urban areas of Bitlis, Mosul, and Diyarbakır.⁸ This was Abdulkadir's first experience as a leader of a Kurdish organization that included other rival families and in which his leadership was not unquestioned.

Ottoman parliamentary minutes (*Meclis-i Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi*) suggest that Abdulkadir was appointed to the Ottoman upper chamber (Ayan Meclisi) sometime before March 1910 and remained in this post until 1920.⁹ With Abdulkadir's appointment to the Ayan Meclisi, he began to be integrated into the Ottoman bureaucracy. A claim exists that Abdulkadir served in the revived Hamidiye Light Cavalry as a second lieutenant.¹⁰ After the Great War, Abdulkadir became the chairman of a sub-committee (Şura-yı Devlet) in the Ottoman senate, a very prestigious position in the Ottoman bureaucracy.¹¹ It is most significant to note that the SAK, a Kurdish political organization that

clearly pursued a nationalist program, was established before this date. During and after the formation of the SAK, Abdulkadir kept his position in the Ottoman system and was also involved in Ottoman politics.¹² For example, he was also a member of the second Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası (Party for Freedom and Harmony) in 1919. We do not know when exactly he joined the party or what kind of political activities he was involved in. We do know that this party was on the opposite end of the Ottoman political spectrum from the CUP. Abdulkadir's membership in this party and his position in the Ayan Council are noteworthy, because they exemplify beyond dispute the connection between Kurdish leaders and the Ottoman political scene. They also reveal that Abdulkadir sometime before 1919 joined in the growing opposition to the CUP, a political movement he once served.

Abdulkadir derived his authority among the Kurds of Istanbul partly from his position in the Ottoman state and partly from his religious pedigree. Early in the twentieth century, the Kurdish population of Istanbul, estimated at around ten thousand, did not consist solely of the notables and their children; many were laborers. Due to his religious appeal, British sources tell us, Abdulkadir was particularly popular among the lower-class Kurdish workers in Istanbul.¹³ These workers were mainly porters (*hamal*) who had come to Istanbul to replace the Armenian porter population. This support of the uprooted Kurdish population in Istanbul also contributed to Abdulkadir's strength there when it was challenged by the Bedirhani family.

In 1918 Abdulkadir assumed the presidency of the SAK despite Emin Ali Bedirhan's covert opposition. Like his father, Sayyid Ubeydullah, Abdulkadir entertained the idea of establishing an autonomous Kurdish state in which he could be ruler; but he sought British assistance. During the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, which resulted in the Treaty of Sevres, he tried to influence international opinion on the Kurdish question.¹⁴ Kadri Cemil in his memoir states that Abdulkadir and his friends visited the representatives of the American, French, and British governments in Istanbul to promote the Kurdish nationalist cause. However, since American policy particularly favored an independent Armenia at the expense of Kurdistan, the SAK did not find a sympathetic hearing. Only the British promised Abdulkadir the recognition of Kurdish national rights.¹⁵ The British view of Sayyid Abdulkadir can be seen in a 1920 memorandum by Mr. Ryan, the British High Commissioner in Istanbul. The commissioner indicates that Abdulkadir had asked for British support to install him as the Kurdish ruler.

Abdul Kadir Effendi was offering . . . the collaboration of Kurds who claimed to be very distinct from the Turks. . . . [However] the religious motive weighs a great deal with him, and I think it is for that reason that he now favors autonomy under the Turkish flag, as he is probably faithful at heart to the Caliphate, though disloyal to the Sultanate.¹⁶

The excerpt is important, for it suggests Abdulkadir's autonomist tendencies. It also underlines the importance of his religious identity. British archival documents provide us further information about Abdulkadir's aim. In a report to Earl Curzon, the acting High Commissioner in Constantinople and Ryan's successor, Richard Webb states:

In private conversations [Abdulkadir claimed that] what Kurdistan needs is administrative separation under British auspices, and that, if this were assured, independence from Turkey would not be essential. If the British government met his wishes and gave him a leading position in the kind of Kurdistan he advocates, he would be prepared at any moment they wish to declare independence. Meanwhile, he does not wish to compromise himself unduly and he is undoubtedly actuated a great deal by veneration for the Caliphate.¹⁷

It is clear from the report that Abdulkadir respected the office of the caliphate and did not favor secession. To receive British support, however, Abdulkadir was cautious not to rule out complete independence entirely. Abdulkadir wished to be set up as the ruler of Kurdistan by Britain. If Britain insisted, Abdulkadir was ready to declare independence for Kurdistan. Did the British really favor an independent Kurdish state? A brief examination of a British archival document illustrates that the British entertained the idea but did not ultimately favor Kurdish independence. Mr. Ryan, an opponent of an independent Kurdistan in Anatolia, says:

In a previous memorandum, I have suggested that His Majesty's Government should study the advisability of a new policy in the country on the basis of open opposition to the extremists of national movement, collaboration with a *bloc* of moderate elements, the maintenance of a relatively large Turkey and effective, though veiled, foreign control (mainly Anglo-French) over the whole of that Turkey. If this policy were adopted, it should be possible to fit men like Seid Abdul Kadir and the Bedrhans into the scheme by assuring to them a considerable though carefully controlled role in the administration of the regions in which their hereditary and religious influence counts. I cannot but think that this would produce better results than formal separation of Kurdistan from Turkey, followed by a formal partition into English and French protectorates.¹⁸

This was the dominant view among the high-ranking British officers, who served in the Middle East Department (established in 1921), although there were exceptions.¹⁹ The British government did not find a separate Kurdish state

conducive to her interests in the region, but wanted to use the influence of Abdulkadir clandestinely to control the region. However, Britain never discouraged the Kurdish nationalist aspirations, hoping to use them against the Ottoman Empire and later Turkey. For this reason, the Treaty of Sevrés of 1920 stipulated that the Turks should recognize the national rights of the Kurds; and if the Kurds proved to the League of Nations that they were capable of self-government, Turkey would recognize them as sovereign (articles 62 and 64 in particular). However, Sevrés was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which ended the hope of an “independent Kurdistan.”

During this time, a split occurred in the SAK between the secessionists and the autonomists. Sayyid Abdulkadir, pressured by the other members of the Ottoman senate, gave an interview to the newspaper *İkdam* on 27 February 1920. In the interview, he denied the accusations that he wanted to secede from the Ottoman Empire and to establish an independent Kurdistan, but stated that “today Kurds are residing in five or six provinces (*vilayet*); [we want] the [Turkish] government to give autonomy to these provinces. Let us elect our own administrators, but Turks can take part in this autonomous administration.”²⁰ Such a bold statement against independence triggered the Bedirhani faction to oppose the autonomists. Emin Ali Bedirhan dismissed Abdulkadir from the presidency and expelled him from the SAK. In response, Abdulkadir dissolved the SAK and called for a new election.²¹ A British report indicates the victory of Abdulkadir: “The elections for a new committee of the Club [the SAK] ended in a complete victory for Seid Abdul-Kadir, as was to be expected from the fact that he has the support of the bulk of the Kurds of the working class in Constantinople.”²²

Soon after Abdulkadir’s victory, Emin Ali Bedirhan and the secessionist group split from the SAK. This split very much hindered the political activities of the SAK. For example, a split of such magnitude convinced Britain that no single authority existed in Istanbul or elsewhere that could speak for the Kurds as a whole. It quite possibly caused the British officials stationed in the Middle East to believe that a “Kurdish Sharif Husayn” did not exist to mobilize a large portion of Kurdish society against the Ottoman Empire. And supporting a Kurdish faction would not necessarily bring success. Hence, such a split at a very critical time possibly cost the Kurds the greatly needed British support.

In the following five years (1920–25), Abdulkadir watched very closely the emergence of a new Turkey, and at one point he offered his help to the British in destroying the Kemalist movement. This was also the period in which both factions began to oppose Kemalists. In a memorandum, the British High Commissioner Mr. Ryan states: “Abdul Kadir’s doctrine some months ago was that the Kurds could be used to *destroy* [emphasis added] the Kemalists and to bar Bolshevik progress.”²³ This statement is extremely significant in that it reveals the hostile attitude of Abdulkadir towards the Kemalists, whose success threatened

even the possibility of a Kurdish state and, of course, Abdulkadir's leadership in it. Abdulkadir's hostility to the Kemalist movement is also evident in the statement he made in the Ottoman Parliament on 8 March 1920. In his statement, Abdulkadir showed great concern that Kemalist forces in Kurdistan were inciting Kurdish groups against Great Britain and that these anti-British activities would cause a grave problem for the Ottoman Empire.²⁴ The Kemalists in Anatolia were not as tolerant of Kurdish autonomy as the Istanbul government was, and they bitterly opposed to Kurdish secession. It was because he was aware of the slim chance of a Kurdish state under a Kemalist regime that Abdulkadir apparently offered his help to Britain to destroy the Kemalist movement in Anatolia.

Correspondingly, the Kemalists were not happy with the religious authority Abdulkadir represented and were undoubtedly aware of Abdulkadir's hostile feelings towards them. The suitable time for revenge arrived in 1925 when the new Republican government suppressed a Kurdish revolt in Kurdistan. This revolt, known as the Shaykh Said Revolt, created the first major internal challenge to the new Turkey. Said, a Naqshbandi shaykh, revolted against the Kemalist regime in the Bingöl region. He sought the restoration of the Sharia and, to this end, he established contacts with Abdulkadir in Istanbul. The Ankara government took the revolt very seriously from its beginning on 8 February 1925 and deployed its military forces in the region. Although Shaykh Said's militia was successful in capturing several towns near Diyarbakır, the government forces were able to recapture the towns and Shaykh Said himself on 15 April 1925. After the suppression of the Shaykh Said Revolt in the following months, Shaykh Said was tried and hanged on 29 June 1925. The new Turkish Republic also tried Sayyid Abdulkadir in the Diyarbakır Independence Tribunal for his alleged connection to the revolt, which provided the Kemalist government with a justification to eliminate Abdulkadir, who was proven to be an ardent anti-Kemalist. Abdulkadir and his son Mehmet were found guilty of treason and condemned to death by the Independence Tribunal. They were executed on 27 May 1925, even before Shaykh Said. The other son, Abdullah, managed to escape to Iran. The execution of Abdulkadir can readily be seen as the revenge of the Kemalists against an influential Naqshbandi shaykh who collaborated with the British against Mustafa Kemal and Turkish nationalists. In the following period, none of the surviving members of the family took part in the Kurdish nationalist organizations in Turkey.²⁵

The Şemdinan family represented the autonomist strain of Kurdish nationalism, and Sayyid Abdulkadir personified their attitudes. He was typical of most religiously oriented Kurdish political leaders in that he stopped short of advocating secession or outright independence—the position of his most significant rivals—the Bedirhan family. Yet Abdulkadir typified Kurdish leaders of all factions in two important respects. First, he actively began serving Kurdish nationalism only when the Ottoman Empire was near collapse. Second, he

opposed Kemalist-Turkish nationalists because they advocated a unitary Turkish national state and consequently demanded the integration or subordination of the Kurds and other ethnic minorities.

The Bedirhani Family

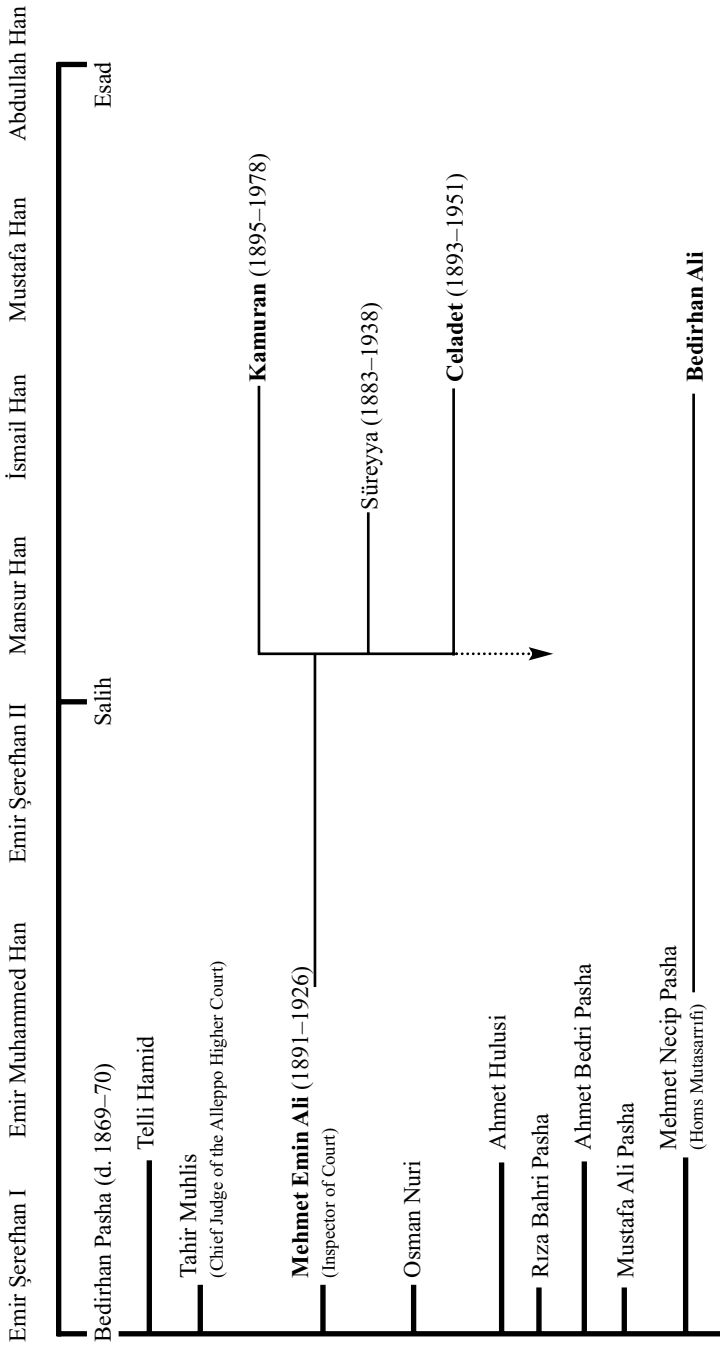
The major rival of the Şemdinan family for leadership in the earliest phase of Kurdish nationalism was the Bedirhani family. It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that Bedirhan Pasha should not be seen as a nationalist figure in Kurdish history, for his revolt against the Ottoman Empire did not stem from a nationalist design. However, the next generation of the Bedirhanis had significant roles in the emergence and development of Kurdish nationalism. Many children of Bedirhan Pasha played active roles in Kurdish organizations that emerged during the Second Constitutional Period (1908–20). In the wake of World War I when Kurdish nationalism emerged as a political movement, Emin Ali, one of the elder children of Bedirhan, became an ardent advocate of Kurdish independence and a champion of the Kurdish nationalist cause.

Emin Ali Bedirhan

Emin Ali Bedirhan (1851–1926) was undoubtedly one of the most devoted and well-known exponents of Kurdish nationalism. He was born in Crete and was one of twenty-one sons of Bedirhan Pasha.²⁶ Emin Ali (also called Mehmet Emin) had eight children of his own,²⁷ three of whom—Süreyya, Kamuran, and Celadet—became vigorously involved in nationalist activities.

Of Bedirhan Pasha's children, Emin Ali distinguished himself as one of the better educated. Literate in at least Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish (Kurmanci), and French, Emin Ali studied law and became a public prosecutor in the Ottoman judicial system. As an Ottoman civil servant, Emin Ali served the Ottoman state as a public prosecutor, a judicial inspector, and a judge in Adana, Selanik, Ankara and Konya.²⁸ In 1906 his cousin Abdürrezzak,²⁹ (Abdulhamid's former head court-chamberlain or *başmabeynci*), and his brother Ali Şamil (the military governor of Üsküdar) became involved in the killing of Rıdvan Pasha, the mayor or *şehremini* of Istanbul, who seemed to have close contact with the palace. As a result Emin Ali was sent into exile in June 1906 with other members of his family by Sultan Abdulhamid II.³⁰ Nazmi Sevgen states that Sultan Abdülhamid II paid very careful attention to the killing of Rıdvan Pasha, suspecting that this would be a sign for a plot against him.³¹ Although such a plot or Emin Ali's involvement in the killing was never proved, the Bedirhanis remained exiled until the CUP takeover. After his exiles to Isparta and Akka in 1906, Emin Ali was allowed to return to Istanbul.³²

The Bedirhan Family



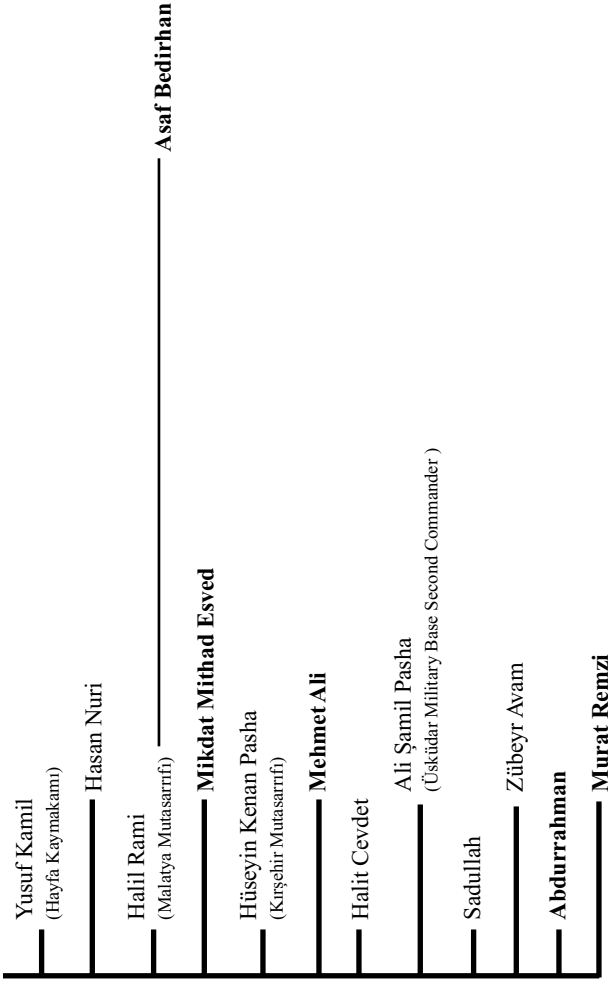


Figure 5/2: The Bedirhan family, based on a document in B.A., İrade Dahiliye, 1286/41717. See also Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan* (Cairo: Matbaa-ı İctihad, ca. 1907). For more information about the members of this family, see Malmisanj, *Cizra Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesinin Tutanakları* (Spanga: Apec, 1994). Those with names in bold held membership in the SAK.

In 1908, Emin Ali became a founding member of the first Kurdish organization established in Istanbul, the Society for Mutual Aid and Progress of Kurdistan (SMPK). In this organization Emin Ali worked closely with Sayyid Abdulkadir and perhaps this reinforced his objections to Abdulkadir's leadership in Kurdish community. Unfortunately, lack of material does not allow us to elaborate on the personal rivalry between the two men in this organization. Sometime before the end of World War I, this organization became inactive.³³ However, in 1918 Emin Ali joined Sayyid Abdulkadir one more time in forming the SAK and became the vice-president of this organization. Emin Ali's secessionist activities began at the end of World War I. It was only then that Emin Ali openly challenged Abdulkadir's autonomist view and pursued a secessionist agenda with the goal of establishing an independent Kurdistan. It is very likely that Emin Ali saw independence from the Ottoman Empire as the only way to recover his family's territory, wealth, and legacy. As has been seen, when Abdulkadir identified himself as an autonomist, Emin Ali deposed Abdulkadir from the presidency of the SAK and expelled him. In return, Abdulkadir dissolved the central committee of the SAK and announced that new elections would be held.³⁴ The new elections, as mentioned earlier, resulted in Abdulkadir's complete victory and consequently in the breakup of the SAK.³⁵ Upset with the result in 1920, Emin Ali formed another organization, the Kürt Teşkilat-ı İctimaiye Cemiyeti (Society for Kurdish Social Organization).³⁶ Unlike Abdulkadir, who advocated autonomy, this society promoted complete independence.

British sources confirm that preexisting rivalry between the Şemdinan and the Bedirhan families was a major contributor to this split. One observes:

The organizers of [the Society for Kurdish Social Organization] profess to have joined issue with Seid Abdul-Kadir on a question of principle, namely, the question of independence versus autonomy. In reality personal rivalry counts for a great deal on both sides. . . .³⁷

Supporting evidence for this view comes from Zinar Silopi (Kadri Cemil), a member of the SAK. In his memoir, Zinar Silopi points out the family feud between the Bedirhanis and the Şemdinans in Kurdish organizations prior to the SAK. He argues that the formation of Kurdish organizations stemmed from personal and factional interests:

During the time of chaos that the Ottoman Empire was facing [in the early twentieth century]—when the Ottoman state was not able to sustain them properly—Kurdish pashas and notables [*ümera*] who belonged to and were paid by the Ottoman system panicked, and saw the promotion of Kurdish nationalism as the only remedy. These people, *who carried with them their personal conflicts* [emphasis mine],

formed the Kürt Teavün ve Terakki in 1908. Unfortunately, this organization did not last long, for its members had personal enmities.³⁸

Zinar Silopi sees the same weakness persisting in the SAK and claims that personal enmities were the reason for the split within the SAK.³⁹ İsmail Göldaş, a Kurdish researcher, makes the same point when he states that the “existing hostility of the families . . . reflected itself, willingly or not, in their contradictory political behavior. . . . They were not able to go beyond this feudal conflict and to establish a democratically based Kurdish national consciousness.”⁴⁰

It seems very likely that the family competition between the Bedirhani and the Şemdinan families originated in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Ubeydullah, the father of Abdulkadir, extended his influence over the areas formerly controlled by the Bedirhanis. As discussed earlier, we do not know whether or not the Şemdinans owned any Bedirhani land as their private estates; we do know, however, that in the 1870s and 1880s the Şemdinans had great influence over the area that was formerly controlled by the Bedirhanis.⁴¹

Until the end of his life, Emin Ali was very actively involved in Kurdish affairs. However, even during his Kurdish nationalist activities, he maintained his Ottoman identity and participated in politics in the Ottoman Empire. For example, in 1920 Emin Ali still participated in the Ottoman political system. He joined Ottoman political parties, such as the decentralist Ahrar Fırkası (Party of the Free, est. 1908) and later the Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası, (Freedom and Harmony Party, est. 1911, reopened in 1919), both of which were known for their opposition to the CUP.⁴² His participation in Ottoman politics in these opposition parties to the CUP is significant in that it demonstrates the general attitude of Kurdish leaders toward the CUP administration. The reader will remember that Sayyid Abdulkadir was also a member of the Freedom and Harmony Party. It also demonstrates that, until the end of the war, the Kurdish opposition to the CUP had appeared and sided with Ottoman decentralist political parties. In Emin Ali’s case, the idea of decentralization later gave way to the idea of secession.

An interesting note in the diary of Celadet, a son of Emin Ali, suggests that until 1923, Emin Ali was on the payroll of the state as a retired Ottoman civil servant. In his entry dated 5 May 1923 Celadet notes that “My father’s [retirement] salary is cut; the national government [the Ankara government] has passed a bill stopping the payments of the retirees living abroad.”⁴³ It was possibly the Istanbul government, or whatever was left of it, that was responsible for the salary distribution of Ottoman civil servants until the Kemalist government fully established itself in 1923. This fact and the fact that none of the Kurdish nationalists were prosecuted—though criticized, watched, and warned—for their nationalist activities suggest that until the end, the Ottoman state refused to see Kurdish nationalists as a vital threat. In the Republican period this was no longer the case.

Although Emin Ali's designs for a Kurdish state differed from those of Abdulkadir, both were united against the Kemalists. The Kurdish leaders knew that the Kemalists fully intended to implement the first article of the National Pact (Misak-ı Milli), which rejected the separation of any territory where the majority were Muslims.⁴⁴ The boundaries of the Turkish state conflicted with those of Kurdistan as promoted by the SAK. Both leaders were aware then that Turkish nationalism would not give any chance to incipient Kurdish nationalism aimed at the creation of Kurdistan in Anatolia. In the post-World War I period, Emin Ali, convinced of the Ottoman Empire's collapse, wanted to collaborate with Greece against the emerging Kemalists. In a letter to Earl Curzon, Sir H. Rumbold, the British High Commissioner in Istanbul, documents this assertion. The letter indicates that Emin Ali contacted the Greek representatives in 1921.

... I have the honour to state that on the 25th instant Emin Ali Bey, the head of the Bedrhan family, called on Mr. Ryan, accompanied by his son Jeladet Bey, who is one of the more active promoters of [the] Kurdish national movement. Emin Ali Bey said that, in view of the present situation, he and his friends had come into touch with the Greek representative here, who had listened favourably to the suggestion of a Kurdish movement against the Kemalists, which, without any formal co-operation, would promote the interests of both Greece and Kurdish nationalists. ...⁴⁵

This document reveals the extremes to which the Bedirhanis were willing to go to challenge the establishment of the Kemalist state, extremes that even conflicted with the Islamic Kurdish background.⁴⁶

It was probably before the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 that Emin Ali left Turkey for Egypt, where he died in 1926. As mentioned, after Emin Ali's death, his children, particularly, Süreyya, Celadet and Kamuran, became very prominent spokespersons for Kurdish nationalism. Süreyya spent most of his time in Syria and Cairo after World War I; he published newspapers and became heavily involved in Kurdish nationalist activities. Süreyya was not listed as a member of the SAK, but the other two sons of Emin Ali became involved in SAK activities with their father.⁴⁷

Celadet Ali and Kamuran Ali Bedirhan

Celadet and Kamuran (or Kamran) were both educated in Europe. Celadet, Emin Ali's second oldest son, was born in Kayseri and lived most of his life in France, Germany, and Syria. He held a master's degree in law from Istanbul University and completed his studies in Munich.⁴⁸ He was a member

of the European-educated notables, and he spoke Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, German, French, and possibly Greek.⁴⁹

Prior to his career as a Kurdish nationalist, Celadet was conscripted to the Ottoman army as an officer during the First World War.⁵⁰ Like that of other Kurdish nationalists, Celadet's devotion to the secessionist brand of Kurdish nationalism emerged only towards the end of the war and matured after that. In the following period, Celadet became an ardent anti-Kemalist, for he believed that the new Turkish regime would not allow an independent Kurdistan. It is well documented that he and his younger brother, Kamuran, accompanied Major Noel, a British intelligence officer whose main assignment was to assess the possibility of the creation of Kurdistan, in his travels in Kurdistan during 1919. Major Noel was as pro-Kurdish as he was anti-Kemalist. Aware of the Bedirhani activities, Mustafa Kemal, in his famous *Speech*, accurately accuses Celadet and his brother Kamuran of opposing the Kemalist movement in Anatolia.⁵¹ Indeed, the two brothers were very visible in their opposition to the Kemalists and particularly to Mustafa Kemal. For that reason, they were condemned to death in absentia by Turkey in 1923. It is, then, no surprise that Celadet left Turkey for Egypt early in 1923 when the Kemalists declared the new republic.⁵²

In 1927, Celadet was in Syria and became the first elected president of the Hoybun, a Kurdish nationalist organization that was formed there.⁵³ The Hoybun actively supported the Kurdish revolts in Turkey during the 1930s.⁵⁴ However, these revolts in the early Turkish Republic did not succeed, but many have been counterproductive. As a result of them, Turkey responded very aggressively to any Kurdish movement, be it militant, cultural, or intellectual, in the following period. Primary sources suggest that Celadet was as ambitious a person as his father. For example, Kadri Cemilpaşa (Zinar Silopi), another Kurdish nationalist and the contemporary of Celadet, claims that Celadet Bedirhan always entertained the idea of being the king of an independent Kurdistan. "Celadet Bedirhan had a desire to restore the Botan emirate," Kadri Cemil states, "and himself as the ruler; he even wished to be the king of Kurdistan."⁵⁵ Celadet was also an intellectual. Like the other members of the Bedirhani family, he contributed to Kurdish intellectual life by publishing journal, so he founded *Hawar* in 1923, in Kurdish and French, in addition to publishing *Rohani* and *Roja Nu* (with his brother Kamuran). He was also credited with producing Latin characters for the Kurmanci dialect of Kurdish.

His devotion to Kurdish nationalism was observable even in his family life. His wife Ruşen, (or Rewşen), a Bedirhani herself,⁵⁶ also took part in Kurdish nationalist activities in Syria during the Turkish Republican period.⁵⁷ Ruşen continued to be a supporter of Kurdish nationalism even after Celadet's death in a 1951 traffic accident in Damascus.

Kamuran Ali (1895–1978), the youngest son of Emin Ali, was probably the most recognized member of the Bedirhani family in Europe. He received

his degree in law from Istanbul University. He was an active member of the SAK and an ardent anti-Kemalist. At exactly what point he left Turkey is unclear, but he was in Syria helping his brother Celadet in Hoybun and publishing the Kurdish journal *Hawar* after 1923. From 1943 to 1946, Kamuran published another journal, *Roja Nu* (in Kurmanci and French), in Beirut. He spent his later years in Germany and France. In 1948 he moved to Paris and became a faculty member at the Institute of Oriental Languages (INELCO). After the revolt of the Iraqi Kurds in the 1960s, Kamuran became the spokesperson for the Iraqi Kurdish movement in Europe. He acted as the representative of the Kurdish movement before the United Nations. After Kamuran's death in 1978, the Kurdish Institute of Paris named him as the honorary founder.⁵⁸ From Paris, Kamuran was also involved in the Kurdish movements in Turkey and sponsored several Kurdish students in France.⁵⁹ He was married to a Polish princess and did not have any children.

Other Members of the SAK in the Bedirhani Family

The Bedirhani family provided the SAK with several other members.⁶⁰ The following are the other members of the Bedirhani family who are listed as SAK members. They were not very active in the SAK; however, they are included here to show that the Bedirhanis were a typical Ottoman notable family and also to indicate that some of the Bedirhanis took part in the new Turkish regime. Bedirhani Murat Remzi (d. 1941), whose children later took Çınar as their last name, was a member of the SAK. He was the youngest son of Bedirhan Pasha, and was born of a Yezidi mother in Bedirhan's harem. In the Ottoman period, Murat Remzi worked as a police officer and later a judge.⁶¹ Rüksan Güneysu, a granddaughter of Murat Remzi, said that "he was a very strict and aristocratic gentleman; he did not speak Kurdish with us at home."⁶² This information is significant in that it indicates that some of the second generation of Bedirhanis who established themselves in Turkey preferred not to teach Kurdish to their children.⁶³ Why did he prefer not to teach Kurdish to his children? It seems that Murat Remzi made a conscious decision to stay in Turkey and try to fit in with the new Kemalist regime. It is quite probable that he feared the growing radical Turkish nationalist formulations, which considered Kurdish as a symbol of opposition to Turkish nationalism. In order to diffuse the suspicion that revolved around the Bedirhani family, Murat Remzi seems to have remained inactive in Kurdish affairs and to have chosen not to teach Kurdish to his children. A parallel might be drawn with German immigrants to the United States during and after World War II, who did not want their children to speak German.

Another member of the SAK, Asaf Bedirhan, was a grandson of Bedirhan Pasha. He was a French teacher at the Galatasaray Lycée, a prestigious

high school in Istanbul. Bedirhan Ali, another grandson of Bedirhan Pasha, was an officer in the Ottoman army. He was sent into exile with other members of his family in 1906 and was back in Istanbul probably in 1908. Available lists of SAK members also include Mikdat Midhat, a son of Bedirhan, who was one of the publishers of the first Kurdish newspaper, *Kurdistan*. Mehmet Ali Bedirhan, another grandson of Bedirhan Pasha, was also an officer in the Ottoman army. Malmisanij, a Kurdish researcher, points out that contrary to the general tendency towards independence in the Bedirhani family, Mehmet Ali had reservations about plausibility of this goal.⁶⁴

To sum up: representing the traditional landed and urban notable class, the Bedirhanis assumed leadership in the secessionist branch of Kurdish nationalism. A great number of Bedirhanis received nonreligious education and participated in the SAK, and the most active nationalists were educated in Europe. A majority of Bedirhan's sons and grandsons were members of the Ottoman elite. Some of them came to bear the title "pasha," denoting one of the highest ranks in the Ottoman state. The children and grandchildren of Bedirhan Pasha committed themselves to Kurdish nationalism only after World War I, when the Ottoman Empire ceased to exist. Adopting a nationalist rhetoric, which seemed to be the most attractive and legitimate ideology of the time, this family wanted to be established as the rulers of an independent Kurdistan.

As indicated earlier, some of the Bedirhanis were exiled in 1906 from Istanbul to other parts of the empire, but after 1908 they reobtained their governmental posts as administrators or military officers. After the establishment of the Turkish regime, however, most of the Bedirhanis remained silent, and their children seem to have been integrated into and served the Republican government in different capacities. However, the Emin Ali and his three sons—Celadet, Süreyya, and Kamuran—did not return to Turkey after 1923, for they were condemned to death by the Republican regime. They stayed abroad and fought against Turkey and for Kurdish independence in the international arena.

The Cemilpaşazade Family

This family produced two of the most active members of the SAK who later became fervent Kurdish nationalists of the secessionist branch. According to the Sicill-i Ahval records in the Ottoman Archives, Ahmed Cemil Pasha was born in 1837 or 1838 (1253) in Diyarbakır. His father, Hafız Mustafa Efendi, was of the Hacı Abdullah Efendi family.⁶⁵ No information is available about the ancestors of Cemil Pasha, which limits our understanding of the authority of the family in the region prior to Cemil Pasha. However, the titles *hacı* and *hafız* before their names suggest that originally the family enjoyed religious charisma.

At any rate, Cemil Pasha established himself in Diyarbakır as an Ottoman bureaucrat and a member of the local *ayan*. The Ottoman sources show that he learned Arabic and Persian not in school but from private tutors, which suggests that his family were well-to-do.⁶⁶ He served in different levels of the Ottoman bureaucracy in eastern Anatolia and Istanbul (Dersaadet).⁶⁷ On attaining the rank of pasha, Ahmed Cemil became the governor of Diyarbakır, where he was given a large *has*, the highest amount of fief or *timar*. Most interestingly, in 1860 he was appointed to the provincial senate as a member (*meclis-i kebir-i eyalet azalığı*),⁶⁸ and later was commissioned by the central government to stop the “oppression” provoked by two of Bedirhan’s children, Hüseyin Kenan and Osman.⁶⁹ Cemil Pasha seems to have taken part in the capture of the Bedirhanis. We do not know if this event affected future Bedirhani-Cemilpaşazade relations, but we do know that two of the grandchildren of Cemil Pasha collaborated in the secessionist camp with the Bedirhani children.

From the memoir of Cemil Pasha’s grandson, Ekrem Cemilpaşa, it is clear that the family controlled a large estate in Diyarbakır. Ekrem Cemil’s memoir confirms that Cemil Pasha was a wealthy local notable who enjoyed a good deal of land:

Twenty villages were the private property (*mülk*) of Cemil Pasha. In these villages were raised cows, sheep, and horses, as well as cotton, rice, wheat, and barley. The daily luxurious expenses of the Cemil Pasha household, . . . and of his children studying in Istanbul and Europe (. . .) were funded from the income generated from these villages.⁷⁰

The revenues that his land generated provided support for the family’s aristocratic life and supported Ekrem Cemil and Kadri Cemil, two of his grandsons, in their education and nationalist activities. Kadri and Ekrem, who were cousins, became members of the SAK and well-known advocates of Kurdish nationalism.

Ekrem Cemilpaşa

Ekrem Cemilpaşa (1891–1973) was born in Diyarbakır, and, like all the male members of his family, received an education in Istanbul and Europe. After graduating from a local military school in Diyarbakır, Ekrem Cemil was sent to Istanbul, where he graduated from the Istanbul Sultanisi. Successful in science, he was sent by his father, Kasım Bey to Switzerland to study mathematics in 1913.⁷¹ Ekrem Cemil spoke French, Turkish, Arabic, and possibly Persian. It was during his education in Istanbul and later Europe that Ekrem Cemil was exposed to the idea of nationalism.

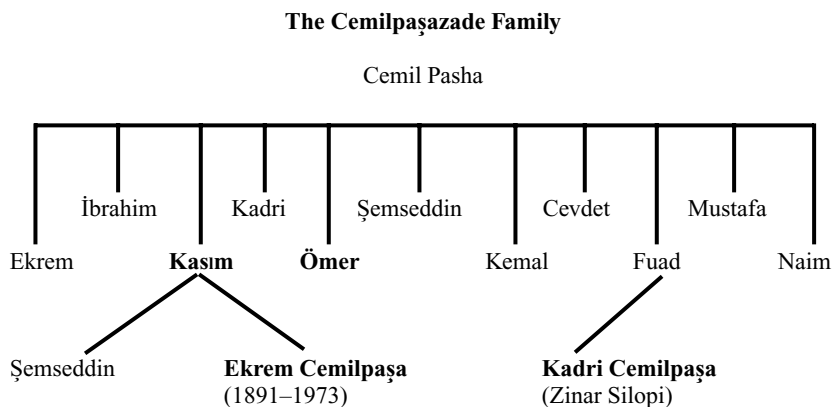


Figure 5/3: The Cemilpaşazade family, based on memoirs by Ekrem Cemil, *Muhtasar Hayatım*; and Zinar Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*. Those whose names are in bold were members of the SAK.

With the beginning of the First World War, Ekrem Cemil, along with other students from the Ottoman Empire, was called back to Istanbul to fight in the war. Ekrem Cemil's compliance with the call of the Istanbul government indicates that prior to World War I, he and his family members who were studying abroad still saw the Ottoman state as legitimate and fought to preserve it. It is important to determine when the family began to oppose the Ottoman status quo, since it demonstrates the pragmatic and modern nature of Kurdish nationalism. Like other Kurdish leaders, Ekrem Cemil became a Kurdish nationalist only after the Ottoman Empire lost the war. Until that time he, like other Kurdish notables who belonged mostly to the landowning class, participated in Kurdish organizations for intellectual and cultural purposes. Ekrem Cemil, for example, was one of the founding members of Hevi organization, which organized cultural activities and was allowed to function by the Ottoman state.⁷² After the defeat of the Ottoman state, diverse ethnic and religious groups searched for a new political structure. Ekrem Cemil's effort to form a Kurdish nation was simply a search to find an alternative political structure with which the Kurds in general, and himself as a distinguished member of this group, could identify.

During the post-World War I period when the future of Kurdistan was undetermined, Ekrem Cemil sought British assistance in establishing an independent Kurdistan. Although the Istanbul government seemed to be uninterested in his activities, the Kemalists in Anatolia were very closely following his pro-British, anti-Kemalist activities.⁷³ Mustafa Kemal, in his famous *Speech*, sees Ekrem Cemil as antirevolutionary.⁷⁴ After the Shaykh Said Revolt in 1925, Ekrem Cemil was arrested by the Kemalists. However, Kadri Cemil, his cousin,

claims that the Cemilpaşazade family offered to buy an airplane in exchange for Ekrem Cemil's freedom, and the Ankara government accepted the offer.⁷⁵ No supporting evidence is available for this claim, however, the fact that Ekrem Cemil was not hanged and given only three years of prison in Kastamonu seems to support Kadri Cemil's claim of a secret deal of some sort. Ekrem Cemil, one year after his release from prison, left Turkey for Syria in March 1929. He remained there until his death in Damascus in 1973; until then he was actively involved in Hoybun and other Kurdish nationalist organizations and activities. There does not exist enough evidence to suggest that his only son and four daughters were actively involved in Kurdish political organizations.⁷⁶

Kadri Cemilpaşa (Zinar Silopi)

Born in Diyarbakır, Kadri Cemil,⁷⁷ another active nationalist of this era, also belonged to the Cemilpaşa family. Like his cousin Ekrem Cemil, he studied in Istanbul and Europe. After graduating from the Numune-i Terakki Mektebi (School for Model Advancement) in 1911, Kadri Cemil enrolled in the Halkalı Yüksek Ziraat Mektebi (Agricultural College of Halkalı) in Istanbul. Two years later, he was sent to Lausanne, Switzerland, where he established, with his cousin Ekrem Cemil, the European branch of Hevi.

With the outbreak of World War I, Kadri Cemil returned to the Ottoman Empire from Europe and was appointed to one of the infamous Hamidiye regiments in the squadron of the Hasenan and Cibran tribes. Modeled after Russian Cossack forces, the Hamidiye light cavalry regiments were established by Sultan Abdulhamid II to fight primarily against Armenian nationalism and Russian expansionism. Often examined by Turkish officers, the Hamidiye regiments were formed and led by Sunni Kurdish tribal leaders. A significant reason for the formation of these regiments was to ensure the loyalty of the Kurdish nobility to the Ottoman state. The Hasenan and Cibran tribes were two of the strongest among the tribes and were pro-Ottoman. It is interesting to note that Kadri Cemil was commissioned and served in these units. Thus, Kadri Cemil was not anti-Ottoman during World War I. Like many of the other Kurdish notables, Kadri Cemil lost his faith in the Ottoman state after World War I—more precisely, after the declaration of the Wilsonian principles, which gave hope to those notables who had earlier lost their privileges as local rulers.

Kadri Cemil was well educated and spoke at least one European language—namely, French. His familiarity with nationalist ideas came from his education both in Istanbul, where he was among Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab intellectuals, and in Europe, where he had the opportunity to be exposed to Western ideas of nationalism. As a French speaker, he would have been aware of the prewar debates concerning nationalism. In the wake of the war when the Ot-

toman state disintegrated, the idea of a Kurdish nation-state seemed very attractive to Kadri Cemil. There exists abundant evidence from the memoirs of Ekrem Cemil and Kadri Cemil that nationalists ideas were carried to the countryside and propagated by the members of the European-educated Kurdish elite in the post-World War I period. Both Ekrem and Kadri indicate in their memoirs that during their visits to Diyarbakır, they wanted to educate the elders of the family and the locals about the idea of nationalism.⁷⁸ However, they were not successful in convincing them of its need.

Although Kadri Cemil's name—like that of his cousin Ekrem—included the word “pasha,” this was not a professional title, but part of the family name. No record exists to indicate that Cemilpaşazades held any appointment either in the Ottoman state or in the Turkish Republic. We know that his life in Republican Turkey was more destitute than it had been in the Ottoman Empire. After the Shaykh Said Revolt of 1925, Kadri Cemil, along with some other Kurdish notables, was exiled to Burdur, a city in western Anatolia. In March 1929, after four years of exile, Kadri Cemil left Turkey for Syria, where he joined other Kurds who were very vocal in their opposition to the new Turkish regime, such as his cousin Ekrem Cemil and some members of the Bedirhan family. The exact date of Kadri Cemil's death, possibly in Syria, is not known.

This family provides a good picture of what Kurdish nationalists were like before and during World War I. First, the Cemilpaşazades were a part of the Ottoman system as members of the urban landed notable class. Their standing was gained partly through their local notable background in Diyarbakır and partly through Cemil Pasha's distinguished service to the Ottoman state. Second, this family controlled a large estate, and family members were very conscious of the wealth and political power that landowning could provide. Third, the Cemilpaşa family became familiar with European political thought through its young members, who were sent to Europe for higher education. Their experience in Europe as students enabled them to assimilate nationalist ideas and gave them a new ideology in the following period when the Ottomanism failed to unite Ottoman citizens as a political community. With their secessionist agenda, however, Ekrem and Kadri distinguished themselves from the Kurdish nationalists of Sufi origin. Although in some cases they were critical of the Bedirhanis, they worked closely with them and evidently belonged to the secessionist camp, which was headed by the Bedirhanis. Their devotion to secession and not autonomy seems to stem from their nonreligious, Western education. Members of this family were not as ambitious as those of the Bedirhanis; however, they took part in the secessionist activities, for the idea of “Islamic unity” under the Ottoman caliph/sultan did not weigh a great deal in their political orientation as it did for the Sufis.

Shaykh Şefik Efendi (Arvasi)

Şefik Efendi was born in the village of Arvas, Van, in the second half of the nineteenth century and died in 1971.⁷⁹ Some family members claim descent from King Faysal, the Hashemite ruler of Iraq who was installed by the British after World War I.⁸⁰ The Arvasi family has branches in Mecca and Medina and was represented in Istanbul through Shaykh Abdulkhakim Arvasi (1864–1943), a well-respected Naqshbandi who was also the head imam of the Sultan Ahmet mosque. Şefik was the nephew of this famous shaykh. Zinar Silopi in *Doza Kurdistan* refers to Şefik as a *madrasa* teacher.⁸¹ But Şefik was more than an ordinary *madrasa* teacher, he was a significant member of the Naqshbandi network. Abdullatif Uyan, in *Menkibelerle İslam Meşhurları Ansiklopedisi*, claims that Abdulkhakim Arvasi, the uncle of Şefik, received his *icazet*, or license to teach Sufi practices, from the Şemdinan family; and he was a *khalifa*, or spiritual representative, of Shaykh Ubeydullah of Şemdinan, the father of Abdulkadir.⁸² It is very likely that Şefik received his *icazet* from his uncle, or perhaps from Abdulkadir himself. At any rate, Shaykh Şefik was connected to Şemdinans through the Naqshbandi network.

Handan Arvas, a granddaughter of Şefik's cousin, indicates that Şefik Efendi was a close friend of Said Nursi, a very prominent religious figure in Turkey (see below). But as important members of the Naqshbandi order, the Arvasi family had a closer relationship with the Şemdinan family of Hakkari, the most influential representatives of the Naqshbandi order in the region. An indication of the strength of the Naqshbandi network is that the close relationship between the Şemdinan and Arvasi families remained after their settlement in Istanbul. Handan Arvasi states that the two families kept in close contact and their children grew up together. The two families also had kinship relations through intermarriages in the following period.⁸³

The Arvasis owned land in Arvas, a village near Hakkari. We know that their estate was not as large as that of the Şemdinans, but how they obtained that land may be comparable. Like the Şemdinans, the Arvasis enjoyed donations from their followers and possibly were involved in the tobacco trade, a common practice in the region. The Istanbul connection of the family through Abdulkhakim might also have provided Şefik, his nephew, with contacts and prestige to purchase land, if some of the land they owned were state or *miri* land. Unfortunately, we do not know from whom the Arvasis purchased the land or whether the Ottoman state donated any land to this family.

The Arvasi family remained important into the Republican period. Looking at the marriage pattern of the family reveals that at least one significant political family in the late Republican period established a marriage connection with the Arvasis. One of the granddaughters of Shaykh Şefik, Didar, married a son of Yusuf Bozkurt Özal, a brother of the late Turkish president Turgut Özal,

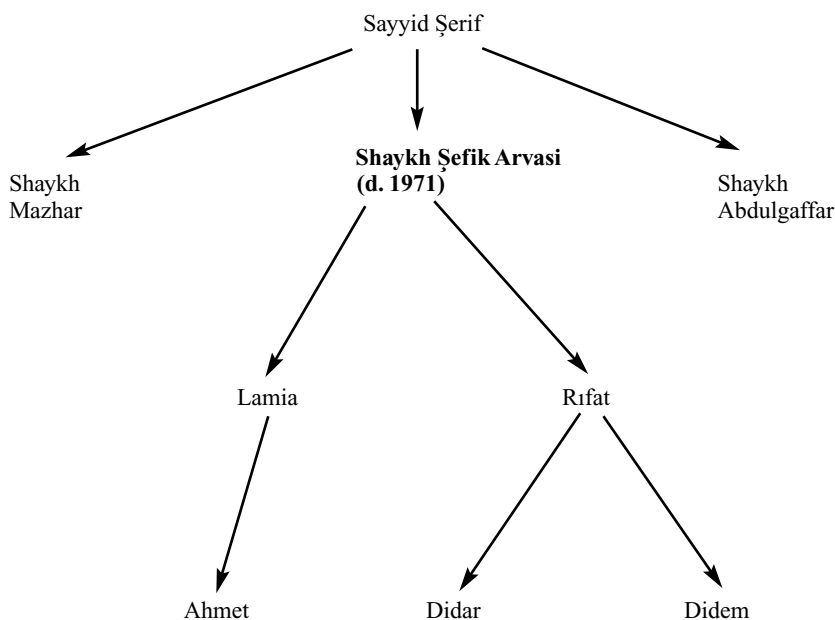


Figure 5.4: The Arvasi family, based on personal interviews with Handan Arvas and Muhlis Arvas, 2 September 2000, Istanbul.

whose family members were notable supporters and members of the Naqshbandi order. It is certainly possible that the Naqshbandi network was instrumental in this marriage, which also indicates the access of the Arvasi family to the upper-level Republican administration.

Şefik probably traveled to Istanbul very often to see his uncle Abdulhakim and must have been living in Istanbul during 1918, for he was a founding member of the SAK. Documents show that Şefik in 1919 became the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Kürdistan*, published by the SAK. Although in his articles he focused on promoting Kurdish identity, during the split in the SAK Şefik supported the autonomists. In this, he was in complete accord with the other Sufi leaders in the SAK. Quite clearly, one reason for the autonomist tendency of the Naqshbandi leaders was their religious training, which mandated submission to the caliph, who was the Ottoman sultan. Kurdish Naqshbandis were reluctant to question the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliph, and hence separation from the Ottomans must have been seen as inappropriate among the members of the *umma* by these religious leaders.

In the Republican period, Shaykh Şefik remained in Istanbul, establishing a Naqshbandi *tekke* in the district of Eyüp. We also know that prior to his

death in 1971, he was appointed as the head imam of the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, a prestigious position in an important religious center. As mentioned, this post was occupied by his uncle Abdulkakim.

Obviously, Shaykh Şefik Efendi was not seen as a major threat to the newly formed Republican state, nor is there any evidence to suggest that he was involved in Kurdish nationalist organizations in the Republican period. In fact, one of his nephews, Abdulkakim Arvas, the father of Handan Arvas (my interviewee), served as a member of the Republican parliament. Furthermore, Ahmet Arvasi, another member of the Arvasi family, denies categorically the legitimacy of Kurdish national claims, criticizing harshly even the possibility that the Kurds are of a distinct ethnic background in the Middle East.⁸⁴ It is interesting to see the intellectual and ideological contrast between the generations in dealing with Kurdish identity. It seems that with a Naqshbandi pedigree, the Arvasi family was one of the successful Kurdish families able to find room for themselves in the Republican regime. Evidently, this family was integrated into the Republican state, although Shaykh Şefik Arvasi was a founding member of the SAK, a society that aimed at creating a Kurdish national consciousness. At this point, a significant question remains unanswered: how did Shaykh Şefik manage to integrate himself into the Kemalist regime and escape Kemalist prosecution? It is possible that Kemalists did not know of his activities as a Kurdish nationalist in the Ottoman period. There is no record in Republican sources to indicate that Şefik opposed the Kemalist regime even during the Shaykh Said Revolt of 1925. His family members also indicated that Shaykh Şefik spent his later years as a man of religion, not a political activist.

Şefik, like many of the other founders of the SAK, belonged to the landowning class and derived his authority from the Naqshbandi order. Therefore, it should not surprise the reader that he remained in the autonomist camp along with the other Naqshbandis. Şefik Arvasi's choice to remain in the autonomist camp corresponds with that of the other Naqshbandi Kurds in the SAK. This is indicative of the cohesion of the Naqshbandi order as a political camp in the SAK.

Mehmet Şerif Pasha

The Ottoman archival sources tell us that Mehmet Şerif Pasha was born in 1865 in Istanbul,⁸⁵ and graduated from the "Mekteb-i Sultani."⁸⁶ He later attended Saint Cyr Military Academy of France. His father, Said Pasha, was a former foreign minister in the Ottoman government.⁸⁷ Following in his father's footsteps, Şerif entered the Foreign Service. He became the Ottoman military attaché to Berlin and Paris and also served as an ambassador to Stockholm

between 1898–1908.⁸⁸ We learn from Ottoman parliamentary minutes that Şerif also served in the Ottoman Senate (Meclis-i Ayan) as the chairman of a sub-committee (Şura-yı Devlet).⁸⁹ Zinar Silopi, in *Doza Kurdistan*, indicates that Şerif Pasha belonged to the prominent Handan family.⁹⁰ This family originated from Süleymaniye, a city in present-day Iraq that was built by the Baban dynasty. While the Sicill-i Ahval does not refer to him as a member of the Baban dynasty,⁹¹ there remains a possibility that the Handan family was a minor branch of the Baban.⁹²

Although his ancestors were possibly local notables, Şerif Pasha, except for his childhood visits, did not have a tangible association with Süleymaniye and with the Kurdish origin of his family. This is also evident in his linguistic skills. Although Şerif spoke Turkish and French,⁹³ and possibly Arabic and English, the British archives document that he did not speak Kurdish.⁹⁴ In this respect, he was unique within the SAK, whose members spoke at least one of dialects of Kurdish despite the fact that some SAK members, such as most Berdhani children, were born and educated outside Kurdistan.

Because of his successful career in the Ottoman Foreign Service, Şerif Pasha was the most internationally known Ottoman Kurd of his time. During his career in the international arena, Şerif Pasha received several medals, including one from the pope, one each from the governments of Romania, Spain, and Iran (Shir-i Hurshid) and one from France (the distinguished Legion d'honneur medal).⁹⁵ This international recognition is mirrored in the high regard in which he was held by other members of the SAK.

Şerif belonged the Committee of Union and Progress in 1895, when its activities flourished in Europe. However, soon after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, he opposed the Young Turk government on the grounds that its members had become despotic rulers, not allowing freedom for opposing views. At that time Şerif Pasha also accused the CUP of misusing government offices for monetary gain.⁹⁶ In his letter of resignation, he states that one of his reasons for resignation was the involvement of military officers, a majority of whom were CUP members, in daily politics. He warned that military involvement in politics had proved to be dangerous in the past.⁹⁷

As early as 1910, due to his open opposition to the CUP in the newspaper *Meşrutiyet*, published in Paris, and his underground organization *Islahat-ı Esasiyye-i Osmaniye Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Society for the Fundamental Reform), the CUP government labeled Şerif Pasha an antiregime revolutionary and accused him of being involved in the killing of Mahmut Şevket Pasha, a former grand vizier and defense minister. The trial held in his absence sentenced him to death on 12 June 1913. However, Şerif Pasha's death sentence was commuted in 1918 by the government of Tevfik Pasha, an opponent of the CUP, and he later was appointed to the Ayan Meclisi or the Ottoman Senate.⁹⁸ At the end of World War I, when the CUP disintegrated and the Tevfik Pasha

government was in power, Şerif Pasha hoped for an appointment to the cabinet, perhaps as the foreign minister. However, he was not given any position in the first administration or the second, which took power on 13 January 1919.⁹⁹ One might suspect that Şerif was highly disappointed in the Ottoman government and perhaps his exclusion from power affected this ambitious man in his decision to become a Kurdish nationalist. In an independent Kurdistan, after all, he might one day very well have become the king.

In his 1911 memoir published in Paris, Şerif does not mention any involvement in Kurdish affairs or clubs, which were already active in Istanbul. Instead, like other Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen of his time, he seems to have been interested in finding remedies for the decline of the Ottoman state.¹⁰⁰ It was after the end of the First World War that Şerif Pasha's Kurdish identity surfaced. At the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, Şerif Pasha headed the Kurdish delegation sent by the SAK. The same year he published a pamphlet entitled *Memorandum sur les Revendication du Peuple Kurde*¹⁰¹ in which Şerif asked for the establishment of a Kurdish state. His agreement on 20 November 1919 with Bogos Nubar, the president of the Armenian delegation, to work together for an independent Armenia and Kurdistan enabled the Kemalists to win the support of Kurdish tribal leaders in Kurdistan.¹⁰² These local Kurds sent telegrams to Paris denouncing the Kurdish representation because of their Armenian alliance.¹⁰³ Soon after this telegram campaign, Şerif Pasha resigned from his position as the president of the Kurdish delegation.¹⁰⁴

Şerif Pasha's involvement with the SAK and nationalist demands coincides with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Before World War I, he advocated the decentralization of power, or Adem-i Merkezizetçilik, formulated by Prince Sabahattin; however, he retained his Ottomanist viewpoint, believing in the unity of the Ottoman state until the end of the empire. Like many other leaders of the SAK, he advocated a separate Kurdish state only when preserving the Ottoman state became impossible.

It should be noted, however, Şerif Pasha was not faithfully devoted to Kurdish nationalism. Under pressure from Istanbul, Şerif renounced Kurdish separatist ideas and withdrew from the Kurdish political scene. Thus, in a telegram to Istanbul dated 23 April 1920, Şerif informed the sultan/caliph that he was loyal to the caliphate and that he resigned from his post as the president of the Kurdish delegation in the Paris Peace Conference.¹⁰⁵ Another British report sees Şerif's resignation as a major victory for the Turks.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, Şerif lacked the devotion to the Kurdish cause of other secessionists.

Şerif Pasha, like many of his fellow SAK members, was a member of the Ottoman bureaucracy; hence his livelihood depended upon the state. With the collapse of Ottomanism, Şerif Pasha needed a new political identity with which to associate himself. It is probably no coincidence, then, that Şerif Pasha's activities for a Kurdish state coincided with the bankruptcy of "Ottomanism."

Not much information can be found about the family life of Şerif Pasha. However, it is recorded that his first wife, Emine, was from a notable family of Egypt.¹⁰⁷ She was the granddaughter of Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Pasha, a former governor of Egypt and a sister of Said Halim Pasha, a former grand vizier (*sadrâzam*). She was well educated and spoke English, French, and Swedish. Ottoman sources suggest that she used her wealth to support her husband's opposition to the CUP and was forbidden to enter Ottoman territories for five years.¹⁰⁸ Clearly, Şerif's wife was one of the better-educated and politically active wives. Although not Kurdish in origin, she became a member of an organization for Kurdish women, Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti (Society for the Rise of Kurdish Women), an organization that was established under the SAK in 1919. Rohat Alakom, a Kurdish researcher, points out that Şerif Pasha was married more than once and that his second wife was also a non-Kurd. Her name was Melle Edwige Pairani, and little is known about her.¹⁰⁹ After the foundation of Turkish Republic in 1923, Şerif Pasha chose not to return to Turkey and lived in Cairo, where he owned land on the fertile banks of the Nile gained through his marriage with Emine.¹¹⁰ There exist contradictory accounts regarding the date of his death. Although most accounts claim that he died in 1944, Rohat Alakom convincingly argues the correct date was not 1944 but 1951.¹¹¹ Where he died is also not known; but probably it was Italy or Egypt.

Şerif Pasha, in the brief period of his nationalist activities, took part in the secessionist movement that was led by the Bedirhani family. However, as was indicated in chapter 3, the map of Kurdistan he produced for the Paris Peace Conference was challenged by Emin Ali Bedirhan, for it excluded the Lake Van region. Nevertheless, Şerif Pasha with his notable pedigree, his place in high Ottoman bureaucracy, and European education personified most of the secessionists.

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi

Said Nursi (1876–1960) was born in the village of Nurs in Bitlis and was known as Said-i Kürdi until the mid 1920s.¹¹² He was born into a clerical family. Şerif Mardin claims that Said Nursi's father was an impoverished village *molla* who had seven children and possessed a small holding of land. Mardin writes:

[That] there was some drive for status in the family appears from the title "mirza" [a Timurid title in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries], which was used by his father and which could be an attribute of noble descent. His grandmother is stated to have been a relative of Alişan Pasha, a regional notable, and Said traced her ancestry to the family of the Prophet.¹¹³

Said Nursi refers to his father as a porter. In *İçtimai Reçeteler*, addressing Kurdish porters in Istanbul, he states, “I have been working for the spread of education in Kurdistan for one and a half years . . . I who am the son of a porter.”¹¹⁴ Although it is possible that Nursi’s father was a porter, he may have used the term “porter” metaphorically to present himself as a man of humble background.¹¹⁵ In his application for a civil service position in the Ottoman Empire, Nursi stated that he was not from a notable family (*sülale-i marufé*). It appears that his family background did not provide Said Nursi with any advantage in terms of establishing himself as a religious leader or of becoming an important political figure in the Turkish Republic.

He was fluent in Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, and Persian.¹¹⁶ In his early education, Said Nursi studied under respected Naqshbandi shaykhs of Nurşin, a village near Bitlis, as well as in the *tekkes* of Mukus and Arvas of Van.¹¹⁷ His tutelage in Arvas provided him with the opportunity to meet the Arvasi family. Although he did not identify himself as a member of the Naqshbandi *tariqa*, he kept himself close to great Naqshbandi families of the region, such as the Şemdinans and Arvasis. Whether he called himself a Sufi or not, Said Nursi derived his authority as a Kurdish leader mostly from his religious identity.

Said Nursi became heavily involved in the political life of his time. In the Ottoman period, he joined the CUP and took part in the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Special [Secret] Organization), which was formed by Enver Pasha in 1914 and played an active role “in the suppression of separatist movements, especially in the Arab provinces. . . .”¹¹⁸ It seems contradictory that Said Nursi was a member of the SAK—a Kurdish “nationalist” organization—and that he worked against separatism in the Ottoman Empire. However, one should keep in mind that Said never identified himself with the secessionists and remained, at most, an autonomist during his career as a Kurdish nationalist. It was unlikely that he saw his position as inconsistent, for he did not perceive his position as an autonomist as violating the principle of unity of Islamic *umma* or as anti-Ottoman.

Not much has been written about Said Nursi’s political activities in the Kurdish organizations. Although his Turkish followers try to downplay his Kurdish identity, Said Nursi, particularly in his early career, paid careful attention to his Kurdishness. He traveled to Istanbul, for example, to ask for sultan’s help in opening schools and promoting the Kurdish language as the medium of education in Kurdistan.¹¹⁹ Prior to his membership in the SAK, Said Nursi’s articles were printed in *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi*, published by the Kürt Teavün ve Teraki Cemiyeti (Society for Kurdish Mutual Aid and Progress), founded in 1908. According to Tarık Zafer Tunaya, a Turkish historian, Said Nursi was a member of the Kürt Neşri Maarif Cemiyeti (Society for the Spread of Kurdish Education) founded in 1919 by the members of the SAK.¹²⁰ In his classic work *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, Tarık Zafer Tunaya does not list Nursi

as one of the founding members of the SAK.¹²¹ But the memoir of Silopi, British documents, and an article published in the newspaper *Vakit* (15 May 1925) all indicate that Said Nursi was at least briefly active in the SAK.¹²²

The evidence indicates that Said Nursi ardently supported the cultural rights of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire, and that after World War I, he was involved in Kurdish nationalist activities. Although he did not favor an independent Kurdish state, he unmistakably entertained the idea of administrative autonomy, and thus remained within the autonomist camp in the SAK. Later in life, particularly in the Republican period, he withdrew from the Kurdish political scene and devoted himself to spiritual teachings.

To his followers Said Nursi would remain a noted political figure in the Republican period, albeit not a Kurdish nationalist. Said helped shape the spiritual and political atmosphere of modern Turkey. As the founder of the “Nurcu Movement”—a modernist Islamic movement that attracted many Turks and Kurds, particularly in the 1950s—Said Nursi commanded great respect from Turks and Kurds alike in the early Republican era. He is considered one of the most prominent Islamic thinkers of his time by his followers. Like the doctrines of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, noted Islamic reformers, whom he called *seleflelerim* (my predecessors), Said Nursi’s teachings centered around the idea that Islam and modernization were compatible, and that modernization was the only way to compete with the West.¹²³ His philosophy has been widely publicized in Turkey and has found a large audience.¹²⁴

Said Nursi differed from the other religious leaders in the SAK in that he did not own land or accumulated wealth. In contrast to other Kurdish leaders, Nursi was not a member of the Ottoman high bureaucracy. He held several lower-level appointments in the Ottoman state. However, as a religious figure he commanded respect and, to some extent, enjoyed political power in the Republican period. Said Nursi never married, and none of his brothers were involved in the SAK or any other political organization.

Hizanizade Bitlizli Kemal Fevzi

Kemal Fevzi (1891/1892(1925) was born in Bitlis.¹²⁵ His father, Reşit Efendi, was a respected prosecutor in Bitlis; there is not much information available about his mother, Hüsnüye Hanım. Kemal Fevzi had a sister, Şefika Hanım, and two brothers: Kadri, a teacher, and Ziya, a doctor. Kemal Fevzi graduated from Erzincan Military School, becoming an Ottoman officer. A newspaper article of 1918 indicates that Kemal Fevzi’s family was an important one in Bitlis. In an article published in *Jin*, the Hizanizade family is credited with opening a private school in Bitlis to teach Turkish.¹²⁶ Only a family of high economic and educational status could open a private school in Bitlis at that

time. Therefore, it is safe to say that Kemal Fevzi was not a commoner. Also noteworthy is that the mission of the school was to teach Turkish. One of the aims must have been to help the non-Turkish speakers of Bitlis to tap into the greater intellectual and economic resources of the Ottoman Empire. It appears, then, that Kemal Fevzi was not raised with anti-Ottoman sentiments, and developed them only later, after World War I.

After graduating from the military school, Kemal Fevzi served in the Ottoman army until he was shot and crippled in the Balkan Wars in 1912–13. Upon retirement, he became a journalist and a poet. Interestingly enough, until the end of World War I, his poetry exhibits Turkish/Ottoman nationalist traits. For example, in one of his poems entitled “Under the Flag,” Kemal Fevzi writes:

I am a son of a Turk, and a persistent slave of this flag.
I carry the revenge of Oğuz Han in my heart like a thunderbolt
and the religion of Muhammed in my soul like a sun.
I am the honorable slave of my fatherland.¹²⁷

It is not surprising to see that a person, educated in a military school, writes such passionate verses of being a Turk and a Muslim; what is surprising is that in such a short time as a year, the very same person turned completely against the ideology he once subscribed to so passionately. In 1918 Kemal Fevzi joined the SAK and began writing for *Jin*, the semiofficial newspaper of the organization. In an article on the autonomy of Kurdistan, Kemal Fevzi wrote that according to the sixty-second article of the Paris Treaty of 1920, autonomy should be granted in regions where the Kurds are a majority.¹²⁸ “If this is the case,” Fevzi maintained, “since the majority of the population living in Bitlis, Van and Erzurum are Kurdish, in those three provinces *Kurdish sovereignty* [emphasis mine] should be granted.”¹²⁹

Fevzi probably first came in contact with the Western ideology of nationalism in the Balkan Wars, in which he was wounded, and in Istanbul, where he was exposed to the process of ethnic crystallization and politicization. He was one of the exceptions in the secessionist branch of the SAK leadership in that he was not educated in Europe and did not come from the large landowning class. Otherwise he was typical in that he acquired a Kurdish identity and became an ardent Kurdish nationalist only at the end World War I. It was in this era that a split occurred between those who were loyal to the status quo and those who saw the power vacuum as a grand opportunity for secession. After the split in the SAK between the secessionists and the autonomists, Kemal Fevzi sided with the secessionists. He later joined the Kürt İstiklal (Azadi) Cemiyeti (Kurdish Freedom Society), and challenged the territorial integrity of the new Turkish Republic after 1923. After the Shaykh Said Revolt of 1925,

which was allegedly supported by the Kurdish Freedom Society,¹³⁰ Kemal Fevzi was arrested and condemned to death by the Independence Tribunal in 1925.¹³¹ His political contributions to Kurdish nationalism were so great that the Kemalist government saw him as a clear danger to the territorial integrity of the newborn Turkish state and executed him.

Conclusion

In the past two decades studies of nationalism have been subject to major revisions, especially concerning its origin. By reexamining the definition of the term, many scholars have argued for later periods for the emergence of nationalism than was previously believed. A similar process in Middle Eastern scholarship is also in progress, and it is readily visible in the scholarship on Arab nationalism. Unfortunately, only a few studies of Kurdish nationalism deal with such a significant issue. Current scholarship unjustifiably finds the origins of Kurdish nationalism in remote times. Establishing an accurate and justifiable time frame for the emergence of Kurdish nationalism is extremely important for current scholarship on Turkish studies. This would bring the disputed issue of Kurdish-Ottoman relations into clearer focus and allow it to be thoroughly examined. Therefore, one of the purposes of this chapter, along with the previous one, has been to establish a precise time frame for the origin of Kurdish nationalism. Undoubtedly, Kurdish consciousness existed prior to World War I, and the Kurds saw themselves (and were seen by “others”) as a distinct group; but, as I have argued, such self-awareness must not be understood as a form of nationalism. Kurdish nationalism emerged as a full-fledged political movement only after the Great War, when the collapse of the Ottoman state became unavoidable.¹³² It should not be a surprise to the reader that the SAK was founded on 17 December 1918,¹³³ less than two months after the Mudros Armistice, signed on 30 October 1918, which signaled the virtual end of the empire. As exemplified in the radical shift in Hizanizade Bitlisli Kemal Fevzi’s poetry before the Great War and prose after it, Kurdish nationalism appeared to be the only viable choice for Kurds in the absence of a functioning ideology such as Ottomanism. It was a result of a desperate search for identity after Ottomanism failed. When studied closely, the composition of the Kurdish nationalist leadership provides us with further evidence for the very same point. Most Kurdish leaders were members of the Ottoman administration and/or military, and hence their standing as *ayan* and their well-being, financial or otherwise, depended heavily upon the state. Destruction of the Ottoman state would not improve their position, as they would face a direct threat from the Armenians, who claimed some of the same territory as their homeland and had international support. The implications of this new understanding of the origin of Kurdish

nationalism must be underlined. Contrary to certain claims that the Ottoman state's frustrating policies paved the way for the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, which in turn helped destroy the Ottoman Empire, my research suggests that it was the disintegration of the Ottoman state, one of the longest-lived empires in world history, that contributed to the emergence of Kurdish nationalism. Kurdish-Ottoman relations deteriorated in the post-Ottoman era when political loyalties were defined in terms of "homogeneous" nation-states. In a larger context, this point supports arguments in present scholarship that nationalism is a modern phenomenon and the nationalist movements by other Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire came to full maturity only after the collapse of the Ottoman state.

One other fundamental conclusion of this research is that preexisting ties and rivalries played a fundamental role in the development of Kurdish nationalism. A close examination of the split in the SAK between autonomists and secessionists makes this quite clear. Although it may seem that a split occurred based on ideological differences, the evidence is overwhelming that the two camps cohered based upon their kinship and religious ties. Emin Ali Bedirhan, who led the secessionist faction, was supported by Celadet and Kamuran (his sons), by Asaf, Ali (his nephews), and by Mehmet Ali, Murat Remzi, Abdurrahman, and Mikdat Midhat Esved (his brothers). Two other ardent members of the secessionist camp, Ekrem and Kadri Cemilpaşazade, were cousins; Kasım was Ekrem's father and Ömer his uncle.¹³⁴ The autonomist faction, led by Sayyid Abdulkadir of Şemdinan, included Mehmed and Abdullah (Abdulkadir's sons) and Shaykh Şefik; they were all respected members of the Naqshbandi *tariqa*, and Said Nursi was trained in the same tradition. Hence, one can safely say that the two groups cohered among themselves based mainly upon kinship ties and the Naqshbandi network.

Preexisting rivalries also set the secessionists and autonomists apart. Primary sources reveal a rivalry between Emin Ali Bedirhan and Sayyid Abdulkadir of Şemdinan prior to the split, though many details are lacking. We do know that as a result of the Ottoman centralization policies in the nineteenth century, tribal leaders lost their control of their territories. This power vacuum was filled by religious figures, who assumed political leadership. Through their transtribal influence, they had great authority with the local Kurds. This created tension between the tribal and religious authorities. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Şemdinan family controlled a region that included a considerable chunk of Bedirhani territory, and Şemdinan rulers emerged as the supreme authority in the region.¹³⁵ In Istanbul, Sayyid Abdulkadir enjoyed great respect among the Kurds and became the president of the SAK. The Ottoman state treated him delicately and installed him as the chairman of a subcommittee in the Ottoman upper chamber. Given these facts, and the fact that Emin Ali Bedirhan wanted himself or perhaps his son, Celadet to be the ruler of Kurdis-

tan, it is very probable that Emin Ali Bedirhan was bitter about Abdulkadir's leadership in Istanbul and about Şemdinan power in Kurdistan.

At this juncture, another fundamental reason for the political polarization of the SAK should be underlined. Members of these two groups came from different educational/religious backgrounds. Autonomists were of *madrassa* or *tekke* origin and were mainly religious professionals. Their political standing was heavily colored by this religious outlook. Correspondingly, the autonomist Naqshbandi faction was against complete independence, for they believed in the unity of the Islamic *umma* and saw the sultan as the legitimate caliph. Although autonomy, so they thought, did not violate Islamic unity, independence did.

In contrast, the secessionists did not have such educational and psychological barriers. They were trained in the professional schools of Europe or Istanbul. Most members of this group were competent in European languages, which enabled them to be exposed directly to nationalist ideology by simply being in the middle of the intellectual and political atmosphere of Europe. In cosmopolitan cities like Istanbul and Cairo, the secessionists were also in close contact with Turkish and Arab nationalists, and were well informed about Balkan nationalist movements.

My research has also determined that Kurdish nationalist leaders were almost exclusively notables; they did not belong to the Kurdish middle class, which was quite small in the late Ottoman period. Moreover, most Kurdish nationalists were predominantly from the landowning class, and possessed a sense of territoriality, a sense that is vital for the growth of nationalism. In other words, the close link between group identity and territory is evident in the claim that the Kurds are the inhabitants of Kurdistan; the land is the defining factor in the formation of Kurdish identity. Therefore, it is significant to note that Kurdish leaders had ties with the land; they were not nomads. Ironically, most of the Kurdish nationalist leaders lived outside Kurdistan, indicating that nationalist feeling was very strong in diaspora communities.

Finally, this chapter has illustrated the distinct Kurdish nationalist attitude towards both the Istanbul (Ottoman) and Ankara (Kemalist) governments. Kurdish nationalist leaders were divided by their adherence to the political future of Kurdistan; however, they were united by their hostility to the rising Turkish state. The Kurds were comfortable dealing with the Ottoman government; indeed many of them occupied significant posts in it. However, they were quite suspicious of the Kemalists. Emin Ali Bedirhan and Abdulkadir of Şemdinan opposed the new Turkish regime, which threatened their authority as Kurdish leaders and their hopes for a Kurdish state. They both offered their services to Britain to destroy the Kemalist movement in Anatolia. Kurdish leaders saw the Kemalist regime as the continuation of the CUP, which had imposed Turkish nationalism on them. They were also aware of the inevitable conflict caused

by two competing nationalisms in one territory, for they had had a similar experience with Armenian nationalism. Kurdish leaders were fearful of the growing potential of Turkish nationalism to threaten Kurdish nationalism, for it was proven that international help for unprotected Kurdish nationalism would never materialize. It is noteworthy that the conflict caused by the two competing nationalisms in one territory laid the very foundations of “the modern Kurdish problem” in the Middle East in general, and in Turkey in particular.

Concluding Remarks and Suggestions for Further Research

In this book I have tried to explain the basic social, political, familial and geographical factors in Kurdish nationalism. To do so, I have dealt exclusively with the interaction between the Ottoman state and Kurdish tribes, with the religious, tribal, and familial background of the Kurdish nationalist leadership in the late Ottoman era, and with the evolution of Kurdish identity in relation to Kurdistan. Here I wish to highlight several significant points argued in this book.

First, I have tried to show that Kurdish nationalism is territorially based. Territory played a very significant role in Kurdish identity formation, which in turn paved the way for Kurdish nationalism. A close examination of primary sources regarding the Kurds reveals that Kurdish identity is tied very intimately to a territory called “Kurdistan,” in relation to which the Kurds, for centuries, have defined themselves. In other words, Kurdish identity revolves around an unfocused picture of a “core area” in upper Mesopotamia where the “historic Kurdistan” lies. My research has suggested that this region has constituted a basis for Kurdish identity, a region without which any definition of a Kurd becomes very difficult to provide. Such a proposition is supported by the fact that primary sources seem to be more concerned with defining Kurdistan than with defining the Kurds themselves. It appears that religion and language have played only a secondary role in the long process of Kurdish identity formation. These other bonds of a shared religion and language were used principally to exclude non-Muslims (such as Armenians and Nestorians) and the other non-Kurdish dwellers in Kurdistan (such as Turcomans and Arabs).

By stressing the role of territory in forming a social identity, I do not mean to suggest, by any means, that Kurdish identity is fixed. On the contrary, the boundaries of Kurdistan have shifted since the twelfth century, and it appears that Kurdish identity is always in flux, corresponding to the changing borders of Kurdistan and the changing political climate. Such a change in the perceived borders has resulted largely from political and military developments external to

Kurdish society. For example, in his book *Şerefname*, Şerefhan includes Luristan in Kurdistan and sees the Lurs as a Kurdish subgroup. The majority of the twentieth-century maps drawn by the Kurds themselves, however, detach the Luristan region from Kurdistan. I believe this change occurred as a result of the political restructuring of the Middle East. Until the end of World War I, political boundaries in the region were constantly changing. Particularly after the eighteenth century, European sources, which were widely used by Kurdish intellectuals in the twentieth century, defined Luristan as a separate administrative unit in Iran. For example, there are articles in *Jin*, a newspaper published by the SAK, that relied on the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and other European works. It seems plausible that Kurdish rhetoric was influenced by these accounts, and since Luristan was regarded as a separate region, the Lurs acquired a distinct identity. In the same way, the Zazas (Dimli), at present dispute the claims that they are of Kurdish origin. A distinct Zaza nationalism became more visible particularly in the last decade of the twentieth century, and maps of Zazaistan as a possible nation-state are being drawn at the expense of Kurdistan.

Focusing on the familial, political, and social backgrounds of Kurdish nationalist leaders, I also tried to show that the Kurdish nationalist leadership during the World War I era was dominated by several traditional tribal leaders and by the Naqshbandi elite, who controlled a vast amount of land in the region. However, due to the centralizing policies of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, these leaders lost direct control of their land in Kurdistan and also the great income that came with it. Hence, the Kurdish leaders were very conscious of the importance of territory. It is not a coincidence that the Kurdish nationalist leadership consisted predominantly of the traditional landed and religious elite.

In accordance with their privileged background, there are several characteristics shared by the members of early Kurdish nationalist leaders. First of all, a great majority of them were high-ranking Ottoman officials. Sayyid Abdulkadir, for example, was the chairman of a subcommittee (Şura-yı Devlet) of the Ottoman senate (Meclis-i Ayan); Şerif Pasha served as an Ottoman diplomat in Europe and also as a member of the Meclis-i Ayan. In addition, a great majority of the Bedirhanis bore the title “pasha” and served as public prosecutors, local administrators (outside Kurdistan), military officers, and judges. In other words, they were on the payroll of the Ottoman Empire. Integrating the nobility into the Ottoman bureaucracy and connecting their interests to that of the state were part of a very common Ottoman strategy for controlling the people of the peripheries, and it worked well until the end of World War I.

The second similarity among Kurdish nationalist leaders was their mandatory residence outside Kurdistan. A great majority of influential Kurdish leaders were located in Istanbul, and the state carefully monitored and regulated their access to their territories in Kurdistan. This policy greatly limited the

ability of Kurdish nationalists to mobilize large groups for their cause and hindered the public support necessary for a nationalist movement. Through its established administrative and military structures, the state was able to maintain the status quo and the political loyalties of the local Kurds. Even on the rare occasions that the Kurdish nationalists found a chance to preach Kurdish nationalism in Kurdistan, they failed to receive local support for any action against the Ottoman state. Although the SAK managed to open a limited number of branches in cities outside Istanbul, such as in Bitlis, Dersim, Elaziz (Elazığ), and Diyarbakır, sufficient Kurdish support for political self-determination never materialized. And Kurdish nationalism remained unable to transform itself from being a phase of diaspora activities to being a carefully orchestrated mass movement based in Kurdistan.¹

Although it seems that Kurdish leaders were united by a clear objective and motivated by the idea of nationalism, they certainly were not united in their understanding and promotion of Kurdish nationalism. Kurdish nationalist leadership was split down the middle between those who advocated secession and complete independence and those favored autonomy. The secessionist branch was led by the Bedirhani family and consisted exclusively of other members of the same family and several other traditional notable families, such as the Cemilpaşazades and the Babans. Urban Kurdish intellectuals who were educated in the non-*madrassa* tradition also sided with this branch. The charismatic leaders of traditional Kurdish emirates, personified by the Bedirhanis, were expected to have great influence with local Kurds. However, partly because of the Ottoman policies that kept them away from the region and partly because of the activities of the emerging Kemalist movement in the region, these leaders did not have much chance to politicize and mobilize Kurdish groups for a Kurdish nationalist cause. It is noteworthy to mention here that the same Kurdish groups were successfully mobilized by the Kemalists for Turkish nationalism wrapped in an Islamic package. This is perhaps further evidence for the importance of having a direct access to the region and to the local Kurds.

The other group that assumed Kurdish leadership was the Sufi elite, particularly that of the Naqshbandi order. This order established itself in the nineteenth century in the region through the efforts of Mawlana Khalid, who established the Mujaddidi/Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandi *tariqa*. After the destruction of the power structures of the local emirates, the Ottoman Empire failed to fill the political vacuum in Kurdistan. Following the catastrophic wars between the Ottoman and Russian empires in this century, the Naqshbandi shaykhs inherited the authority of the former tribal leaders. Through their transtribal influence, these Naqshbandi shaykhs became charismatic political leaders. Sayyid Ubeydullah of Şemdinan, whose son Sayyid Abdulkadir later became the president of the SAK, provides a good example of this kind of leadership. Sayyid Abdulkadir represented the autonomist faction, which included

other members of the Naqshbandi network such as Shaykh Şefik. The leaders or shaykhs of these orders provided the Kurds not only with religious guidance but with political leadership; and they were connected to one another through the Naqshbandi network. When they assumed leadership in the nationalist organizations, the Naqshbandi elite, playing on their religious charisma, were strong enough to form political alliances against the traditional tribal leaders. Apparently, these Naqshbandi leaders enjoyed an advantageous position in accessing local Kurds and communicating with them. We do not have evidence that the Naqshbandis utilized nationalist symbols internally in the Kurdish community. On the contrary, Islamic symbols always overshadowed the nationalist ones, and intentionally so.

To sum up, preexisting ties and loyalties, together with old feuds and factionalism, played a significant role in the manifestation of Kurdish nationalism. An examination of the familial structure of the Kurds shows that members of the same families remained in the same ideological alliances, and that interfamilial rivalries caused polarization in the incipient Kurdish nationalism. For example, primary sources indicate that there existed a rivalry between Sayyid Abdulkadir and Emin Ali for Kurdish leadership. I have speculated in the text that this enmity originated in the era when Sayyid Ubeydullah, the father of Abdulkadir, controlled a vast region that also included the former Bedirhani lands (parts of the Botan emirate); and hence the Bedirhanis were not strongly attached, to say the least, to Abdulkadir's leadership of the SAK.

There is another noteworthy reason for the polarization of Kurdish leadership and their dedication to the secessionist or autonomist factions. In accordance with their family background, Kurdish nationalist leaders were the products of different educational systems. While the autonomists received a traditional religious education, the secessionists were educated in the nonreligious professional schools, and most of them studied abroad. It should not be a surprise to the reader that the Naqshbandi faction was against complete autonomy, for they believed in the unity of the Islamic *umma* and until the end of the Ottoman Empire and even afterwards they saw the sultan as the legitimate caliph.² In contrast, the secessionists, at the end of World War I, did not have any remaining loyalty to the Ottoman state or the sultan/caliph. Especially after the declaration of the Wilsonian principles in 1918, the secessionists saw a chance to establish a Kurdish state and with themselves as rulers. When they were convinced that the Ottoman Empire could not recover, they were more successfully able to disassociate themselves, at least psychologically, from the empire than their Naqshbandi rivals. In any case, the educational divide between the autonomists and secessionists contributed to the lack of unity in Kurdish nationalist rhetoric.

In addition to analyzing and searching for patterns in the backgrounds of Kurdish nationalists, this study has also attempted to contribute to the discus-

sions of the timetable of Middle Eastern nationalism. I have argued that Kurdish nationalism, like most other nationalism in the world, is a product of a time of turmoil and uncertainty. My research has uncovered ample evidence to demonstrate this point. I have argued that Kurdish nationalism became articulate when the collapse of the Ottoman Empire became imminent at the end of World War I. An ideological shift can be seen in the constitutions of Kurdish political organizations formed before and after the Great War. A comparison between the constitution of the Kürt Teavün ve Terrakki Cemiyeti (SMPK) of 1908 and that of the Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti (SAK) of 1918 is revealing. The SMPK saw the Kurds as loyal subjects of the Ottoman Empire and wished to operate within the Ottoman system. The SMPK constitution further stated its desire to protect the Ottoman constitutional system (*meşrutiyet*). In contrast, the SAK constitution focused more on the distinction of Kurdishness. The timing of Kurdish nationalism is best illustrated in the writings of Hizanizade Kemal Fevzi, in which we can follow this ideological shift. As I have mentioned, in his poetry prior to 1918, Kemal Fevzi states, “I am a son of a Turk, and a persistent slave of this flag. . . .” Yet in an article in *Jin* in 1920, the same Kemal Fevzi demands sovereignty for the Kurdish provinces. These examples uniformly demonstrate that Kurdish nationalism as a political movement emerged after the Great War, which had a fundamental impact on every aspect of people’s lives. This war forced the peoples of the world to reconsider their political loyalties. Therefore, I believe that Kurdish nationalism, in the modern sense of the word, emerged after World War I. The surprising corollary is that Kurdish nationalism is not a cause but a result of the Ottoman Empire’s collapse. Accordingly, one can question the conventional interpretation of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which is based on the notion that nationalism was a great force for the breakup of empires. This study demonstrates that in some cases nationalism was only a by-product of the collapse.

Directions for further Research in the Republican Period

Although this book has not directly discussed the Republican period, by way of conclusion I would like to make several observations and suggestions concerning research that deals with the relationship between Kurds and the emerging Turkish state. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the “Kurdish problem” naturally spilled over into the Republic of Turkey, the successor of the Ottoman Empire. The issue was present even at the foundation of the republic. When Turkish nationalists waged war on the Western powers, Kurdish separatism was definitely not the highest priority on their agenda. The Kemalists were more gravely concerned with a situation for an independent Armenia in eastern Anatolia and a Pontus state in the Black Sea region. These disturbances

were non-Muslim in origin. Among the members of the Muslim community, Arab nationalism had already obtained international recognition and succeeded in dissolving their union with the Turks. Hence, the nationalist movement in Anatolia had already accepted the fact that the Arab land would not be included in the new national borders. On the other hand, since the Kurds were seen as an essential partner of the Turks in the mutual struggle against Western intervention, the land occupied mainly by the Kurds was regarded as a natural part of Turkey. The Kurds were and had always been an essential ally for the Turks against non-Muslims. Therefore, the dominant opinion in the Ottoman (and to some extent in the Kemalist) circles was that the majority of the Kurds would be loyal to the Turks. There are indications that the Ottoman Empire in its final years allowed the fostering of Kurdish nationalism, trusting that it would counter Armenian nationalism in the region. This can be seen in a letter by Kazım Karabekir Pasha, the former commander of the Ottoman fifteenth subdivision, who was stationed in Eastern Anatolia and later one of the most important figures in the Kemalist movement. In his letter dated 6 January 1920, Karabekir warned the Ministry of War about the dangers of allowing or even encouraging Kurdish nationalism to balance the Armenian threat.³

In the Erzurum Congress (23 July–7 August 1919) held by the Turkish nationalists, the territorial integrity of eastern and southeastern Anatolia was the first concern,⁴ and the major threat to it was seen to be Armenian and Greek (Pontus) nationalism. Mustafa Kemal was cautious but relatively confident of his ability to contain Kurdish separatism in the region, mainly by playing the card of Islam. He was more concerned with the Istanbul Kurds, who were trying to organize a nationalist movement and seeking international assistance. Moreover, these Kurds included members of very respected Kurdish families who could influence or alter the loyalty of the Kurds in Kurdistan at the expense of the Kemalists. Possible British involvement in Kurdish nationalism also troubled the Kemalists.

The issue of how to deal with Armenian and Kurdish nationalism appears to be more pressing for Turkish nationalists toward the end of 1919. A striking example comes from the minutes of the Council of Representatives (Heyet-i Temsiliye), the precursor of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The council was established based on the decisions made by the Erzurum and Sivas congresses to organize a nationalist movement and to combat Western imperialism. Discussing the possibility of giving up a territory stretching to the shores of Lake Van, Rauf Bey (Orbay), a member of the council, stated that any territory in Anatolia that was handed over to the Armenians would result in a Kurdistan problem (Kürdistan meselesi).⁵ Interestingly, Mustafa Kemal did not seem to be convinced that a Kurdistan problem would be troublesome if some of the Kurdish territories were given to the Armenians.⁶ Prior to the opening of the Grand National Assembly in 1920, the loyalty of the Kurds did not appear to be

a great concern, though it was still something of a concern for the Kemalists. Soon, however, it became clear to the Kemalists that the Kurds constituted a potential danger to the territorial integrity of the new state. The first organized Kurdish movement against the Kemalists was the Dersim Revolt in 1921, which definitely confirmed the suspicions of those who questioned the loyalty of the Kurds.⁷

In 1925, a significant Kurdish revolt shook the very foundation of the new Kemalist regime. Shaykh Said, a respected Naqshbandi shaykh in the Bingöl region, revolted against the government, utilizing Islamic symbols that the Kemalists were passionately determined to erase. This revolt lasted only a few months before it was suppressed by the overwhelming Kemalist forces. Its leaders and followers were arrested, tried, and executed, including Shaykh Said himself. The Shaykh Said Revolt was significant not only because the shaykh's militia, led by his *khalifas*, were initially successful in defeating the Turkish military; more importantly, it showed how readily the religious sentiments of a society could be channeled into a political and military movement. Suppression of the Shaykh Said Revolt failed to silence the highly fragmented Kurdish opposition against the Kemalists, but it pushed the base of Kurdish opposition outside Anatolia, mainly to Syria.

In the wake of the Shaykh Said Revolt, several Kurdish uprisings, though not on the scale of the Shaykh Said Revolt, troubled the new Turkish state.⁸ After the last two Kurdish uprisings, those of Ağrı of 1930 and Dersim of 1937–38,⁹ were very harshly suppressed, the Kurdish political and military movement entered an era of silence, an era that lasted until the establishment of the PKK in the late 1970s.

The PKK or Kurdish Workers' Party was initially part of the Turkish socialist movement and originally aimed at the creation of an independent unified Kurdistan. It utilized Marxist ideology, and its leaders were part of the Turkish Marxist movement. The PKK movement drew upon the previous generation's political experience, but in many ways it followed a radically different path. Kurdish intellectuals/activists of the 1960s and 1970s had been very much influenced by Turkish Marxism and saw the roots of the Kurdish problem in class conflict.¹⁰ However, they limited their activities to newspaper publishing and engaging in intellectual debates. The PKK movement, on the other hand, adopted violence as its main method of struggle against the Turkish state. Beginning in 1984, the PKK guerrillas targeted several Kurdish villages, accusing them with collaboration with the enemy, namely the Turkish state. In the following period, Turkish military and civilians were among the targets of the PKK militia. The radical tactics and seemingly nationalist ideology of the PKK prompted other Turkish Marxists and less-militant Kurdish groups to isolate the PKK. However, this isolation did not prevent the undeclared war between the state and the PKK, a war that claimed over thirty thousand lives before the PKK

leader, Abdullah Öcalan was captured in 1999. The PKK movement made the Kurdish problem once again the number one priority of Turkish governments and also helped to internationalize the issue. Although appropriate academic attention is still not paid to the Kurds and Kurdish nationalism, there is a growing interest by the international public in the explosive and destabilizing nature of Kurdish nationalism. No doubt, academic studies on the Kurds in the Turkish Republican period will enhance our understanding of the nature of Kurdish nationalism as an example of unsuccessful nationalism in the Middle East.

As demonstrated in this study, the Kurds, one of several Muslim groups within the Ottoman Empire, were the last group to advance nationalist claims. Arabs were successful in realizing their dream of self-government, which resulted in the establishment of many Arab nation-states, particularly after the Second World War. Like other multiethnic empires, such as Austro-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire was concerned the rise of nationalist movements in the era preceding the Great War. Christian subjects of the empire were successful in creating national consciousness, in receiving Western assistance, and in gaining independence. Since Christian groups, such as Greeks, Serbs, and Romanians, constituted different *millets* or religious groups in the empire, their separation was easy, at least in the ideological sense. This was not the case with the Kurds, whose leaders were of tribal and Sufi origin and were the members of the Ottoman ruling elite. Kurdish nationalism did not and could not demand the termination of the preexisting loyalties in favor of a national one; instead, Kurdish nationalist leaders utilized the preexisting ties to mobilize the Kurdish people. However, by doing so Kurdish nationalism became susceptible to preexisting rivalries.

Compared to Arab nationalism, the emergence of Kurdish nationalism as a political movement was belated, although the Kurds went through a similar process of cultural awareness and expression, particularly early in the twentieth century. One of the reasons for this delay is that until the end of World War I, Kurdish leaders who were also the members of the Ottoman state still had hopes of reviving the Ottoman state. How much this delay affected the success of Kurdish demands obviously requires more research, but it stands out as a major distinction between Arab and Kurdish nationalism.

Another area for comparison would be the distinction between the leadership of the two groups who were the members of the *umma*. While most Arab leaders resided in Arab lands, Kurdish nationalist leaders had a very limited access to Kurdistan and to the local population. Some Kurdish leaders, such as most of the Bedirhans, were born and raised outside Kurdistan. They were kept away from the area by the state. Finally, one can assert that unlike Arab nationalism, Kurdish nationalism did not receive much international support. Great Britain was not convinced that Kurdish nationalism would help British interests in the region.

The closest parallel to Kurdish nationalism in the Arab world is Palestinian nationalism. This similarity is threefold. First and most obvious is that they both represent unsuccessful nationalism in the sense that they have not succeeded in obtaining a “nation-state” of their own. The second similarity pertains to the origin of their nationalist aspirations. Rashid Khalidi convincingly demonstrates that although it originated in a slightly earlier period, Palestinian nationalism gained momentum and “triumphed with disappearance of the Ottoman Empire.”¹¹ Third, Kurdish and Palestinian nationalisms are challenged by surrounding nationalisms that see the same territory as their homeland. All these points require further research and deeper analysis. Future research on comparison between Arab (particularly Palestinian) and Kurdish nationalism would allow us to better understand the dynamics of nationalism in the Ottoman Empire and particularly that within Muslim communities.

I also believe that Kurdish nationalism can be better understood when studied in a larger context. In this study I have attempted to place it within the context of Ottoman history; however, through the methodologies of comparative history, it can be placed within even larger contexts, such as Middle Eastern and world history. It is undeniable that the events of the world are interconnected; hence, to understand the dynamics of nationalism, and to discover possible patterns, one should not ignore “the big picture.”

Notes

Chapter 1

1. This idea was agreed to in the Erzurum Congress on 25 July 1919, but according to Kazım Karabekir, the Sivas Congress on 4 September 1919 followed a more ambitious and unrealistic agenda, since it wanted to include the Islamic lands of the Ottoman Empire beyond Anatolia; see Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimizin Esasları*, pp. 113–14.

2. After the Erzurum and Sivas congresses in 1919, the committee of nineteen members remained active until the inauguration of the Grand National Assembly. See İğdemir, *Heyeti Temsiliye Tutanakları*, pp. 97–98.

3. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*.

4. Hayes, *Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism*, p. 30.

5. As quoted in *ibid.*, p. 155.

6. Smith, “Gastronomy or Geology?,” p. 19.

7. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1982).

8. See Eley and Suny, *Becoming National*, p. 105.

9. Thomas H. Eriksen, a Norwegian anthropologist, goes so far as to claim that “history is not a product of the past, but a response to requirements of the present.” Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, p. 98. See also Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, where he argues that nationalism creates nations, not the other way around.

10. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. See also Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* . . . Geoff Eley and Ronald G. Suny in their introduction also provide a good summary of the position of these scholars. *Becoming National*, pp. 3–39.

11. Renan, “What Is a Nation?,” pp. 8–22.

12. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed., s.v. “Ethnic.”

13. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, p. 4.

14. Gladney, “Sedentarization, Socioecology, and State Definition,” p. 312.

15. Gladney, "Muslim and Chinese Identities in the PRC," p. 120
16. It should be noted here that Gladney does not deny the existence of the imposed identity; on the contrary, he demonstrates that it exists. However, he places it in his category of "dialogical process."
17. Hobsbawm, "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today," p. 4.
18. Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, p. xi.
19. Kohn, *Idea of Nationalism*, pp. 329–31.
20. For example, see Said, *Orientalism*.
21. Connor, "The Nation and Its Myth," p. 53.
22. For example, in a related study Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet discusses the role of the land in shaping Iranian identity. See Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, p. 7.
23. *Encyclopedia of Islam* 2d ed., s.v. "Ayan."
24. Ibid.
25. Akşin, "Siyasal Tarih (1789–1908)," p. 95.
26. For this argument, see Heper, "Center and Periphery in the Ottoman Empire," pp. 89–96.
27. We know at least seven came, Akşin, "Siyasal Tarih (1789–1908)," p. 94.
28. See Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," pp. 36–66.
29. Here, however, the reader should be warned against seeing Arab nationalism as a single movement. Corresponding to the different political and intellectual environments of the area, Arab nationalism shows different characteristics in terms of ideology, leadership, and motivations. Hence, regional variations of Arab nationalism should be taken into account. However, it seems clear that Arab notables played a large part in all regions in the process of nationalism's growth.
30. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, p. 7, 96.
31. Wilson, "The Hashemites, the Arab revolt, and Arab Nationalism," p. 204.
32. See Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*. For a contradicting view, see Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.
33. Scholars in the earlier period put the origin of Arab nationalism in a much earlier period; see Antonius, *Arab Awakening*.
34. Khalidi, "Ottomanist and Arabism in Syria before 1914," p. 51.
35. Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," pp. 3–31. Clearly, the Arab revolt of 1916 was an exception to this claim.
36. Cleveland, *Islam against the West*," p. 24.
37. The SAK hereafter.

38. Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic People*, p. 12. Unless otherwise noted, the following discussion on the Turks is based on this book.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

41. In Chinese sources the “West Sea” (*his-hai*) was mentioned. Golden, examining primary and secondary sources, weighs the probabilities of what the “West Sea” referred to. It seems more realistic to me that the Caspian or the Aral Sea is the territory referred to, for the archeological findings point in that direction. See, Golden, *Introduction to the History of the Turkic People*, p. 118.

42. Gladney, “Sedenterization, Socioecology, and State Definition,” pp. 308–41.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 315.

44. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*.

Chapter 2

1. For other stories of Kurdish origin, see also Cemilpaşa, *Kürdistan: Kısa Tarihi*, pp. 14–15. There are many versions of the Zahhak story. The one I used in the text came from the *Şerefname*, for which I rely on M. Emin Bozarşlan’s translation to Turkish from Arabic. However, for accuracy, I compared Bozarşlan’s translation to Veliaminof-Zernof’s Persian edition of Şerefhan Bitlisi, *Scheref-Nameh; ou Historie des Kourdes*. Bozarşlan’s translation closely follows the original Persian. However, Bozarşlan uses Turkish transliteration of the names and terms for which I omitted diacritics. I am grateful to John Woods for his help in translating the Persian text.

2. There are many editions. One of the more complete ones is Ferdowsi, *Shah-nama* ed. by Jalal Khaliqi-Mutlaq (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1987); I have also referred to E. E. Bertels’s edition published in Moscow in 1964. An abridged translation of *Shahnama* appeared under the title *The Epic of the Kings*, trans. Reuben Levy, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). See also François Bernard Charmoy, trans., *Cheref-nameh, ou Fastes de la Nation Kourde*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l’Academie imperiale des sciences, 1868–75).

3. In the Persian copy this part is slightly different; “since they were isolated in the mountains, they created their own language. . . .” Şerefhan Bitlisi, *Scheref-Nameh; ou Historie des Kourdes*, (trans. Veliaminof-Zernof) 1: 12–13.

4. Şerefhan in *Şerefname*, (trans. Bozarşlan, p. 17) states that there are many other conflicting ones besides this story. They all ascribe to the Kurds a non-Kurdish origin.

5. For exact citation, see Driver, “The Name Kurd and its Philological Connections,” pp. 393, ff.

6. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, book 4, chap. 3; also see Xenophon, *Persian Expedition* (trans. Rex Warner), pp. 131–39.

7. Driver, "The Name Kurd and its Philological Connexions," p. 397.
8. Undoubtedly, Driver was not alone in the search for Kurdish roots in history. Minorsky, in his seminal article in "Kurds, Kurdistan," mentions several other names such as Hartmann, T. Nöldeke, and Weissbach. Nikitin, *Kürtler: Sosyolojik ve Tarihi İnceleme* (trans. Demirhan and Süreyya) adds another name, Marr, to this list.
9. Nikitin cites Theodore Nöldeke, *Kardu und Kurden* (Berlin, 1898) and Martin Hartmann, *Bohtan*; see Nikitin, *Kürtler*, p. 22.
10. Minorsky is paraphrased by Basile Nikitin in *Kürtler*, pp. 31–38. The book was originally published as two volumes, but in 1991 the combined version was published.
11. Bruinessen, "The Ethnic Identity of the Kurds," p. 616.
12. More specifically, the Eleğüş Inscriptions of the Yenisey region, which are a part of the Orhun Inscriptions. The inscribed stones were found in 1888 by Russian scholars; see Tekin, "Elegest (Körtle Han) Yazıtı," pp. 19–32.
13. For the claim see Orkun, *Eski Türk Yazıtları*, particularly the section on the Eleğüş Yazıtları. This view is adopted by some other mainstream scholars; see Kışlalı "Türkler ve Kürtler," p. 2.
14. Orkun read it as "Kürt elinin hanı . . ." According to Tekin, however, it should be read as "(ben) Körtle Han Alp Urungu. . ." Tekin claims that the word in question is a proper noun, and it also appears with frequency in the text. See Tekin "Elegest (Körtle) Han Yazıtı," p. 23. See also Baskın Oran, "İlk Kürt: Körtle Han Alp Urungu."
15. Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, p. 16. He cites Darab Peshotan Sanjana, *Karname-i Artakshshir-i Papakan* (Bombay, 1896), p. 22.
16. Jibal referred to the mountainous region in Mesopotamia. This is roughly the greater Zagros area.
17. "Saymara is in a large plain where springs and rivers supply villages and farms with water. And its inhabitants are varied from Arabs to Persians and to the Kurds (*al-Akrad*). . . . All of them spoke Persian." Ahmed ibn Abu Yakub, *Kitabo'l Buldan*, p. 45. I am grateful to Mustapha Kamal for his help in translating the text.
18. Minorsky, "Kurds, Kurdistan."
19. Muhammad ibn Hawqal gives Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Hasan ibn Durayd, a lexicographer and philologist born at Basra in 837, as his source. Hawqal mentions the Kurds when discussing the inhabitants of Fars, Jibal, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Muhammad ibn Hawqal, *Configuration de la terre*, (trans. Kramers and Wier) p. 267.
20. See Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, p. 250.
21. Minorsky, "Kurds, Kurdistan."
22. Ibid. See also Driver, "The Dispersion of the Kurds in Ancient Times," pp. 563–72.

23. These are Alani, Alishtar, Bahar, Khuftiyan, Darband-i-Taj Khatun, Darband-i Zangi, Dizbil, Dinavar, Sultanabad Jamjimal, Shahrazur, Kirmanshah, Kirind and Khustan, Kanguvar, Maydasht, Harsin, and Vastam. See Mustawfi, *Geographical Part of the Nuzhat al-Qulub*, (trans. Le Strange), pp. 105–7.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

25. A similar argument is made by Tezcan, “The Development of the Use of ‘Kurdistan’ as a Geographical Description,” pp. 540–53.

26. Arfa, *The Kurds*, p. 7.

27. The Bitlis Emirate was one of the major Kurdish tribal confederacies in Kurdistan in the sixteenth century and remained so until the mid-nineteenth century.

28. Şerefhan Bitlisi, *Şerefname* (trans. Bozarslan), p. 20.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, p. 35–36.

31. I should note that some twentieth century writers refer to the Lurs as Kurds. See Zeki, *Kürdistan Tarihi*, p. 24. Zeki comes to this conclusion on the basis of linguistic similarities.

32. See Muhammad ibn Hawqal, *Configuration de la terre*, p. 267. Such proposition in the ninth century did not have an obvious political intent, unlike in the twentieth century.

33. For more information about Şerefhan Bitlisi, see Naficy, “Bidlisi, Sharaf al-Din Khan.” Also Ahmed, *Tarihin Tarihi, Kürtlerde Tarih, Tarihte Kadın*, pp. 54–63.

34. For more detailed information, see the next chapter.

35. In *Shahnama* the person responsible for their release is the cook who was in charge of killing the youth and preparing the brains.

36. “Chu gird amadi mard azishan divist / Baran san kih nashinaktandi kih kist / Khurishgar bidishan buzi chand u mish / Sipurdi u sahra nihadish pish / Kunun Kurd az an tukmah darad nizhad / Kaz abad nayad bih dilbarash yad.” In Ferdowsi, *Shahnama*, (ed. Khaliqi-Mutlaq), 1: 57. I am grateful to John Woods for his help in translating the text.

37. Masudi’s book was translated into French by Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille under the title *Les Prairies d’Or*. It appeared in English as *The Meadows of Gold*, trans. Paul Lunde and Caroline Stone (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1989). For its discussion of the origin of the Kurds, I used the French translation, which included Arabic on top of each page. See Masudi, *Les Prairies d’Or*, pp. 249–252.

38. According to another story, Satan impregnated slave women who were not faithful in the court of Solomon (son of David). After they gave birth to children of Satan, Solomon ordered that they be sent to the mountains. These children became the Kurds. Masudi, *Les Prairies d’Or*, 3:250–51.

39. “The famous hero Rüstem bin Zal who lived during the Keykubad era was from among the tribes of the Kurds [*ekrad*],” Şerefhan, *Şerefname* (trans. Bozarşlan), p. 23.

40. In the twelfth century the extra line over the letter k, which makes the letter to be read as g did not exist, and hence can cause confusion.

41. There are many versions of the epic *Mem-u Zin*, but Ahmed-i Hani’s version has enjoyed the most attention from scholars. For other versions, see Ward, “Foreword to *Mem u Zin: Kurdish National Epic*,” p. 1. The genre of the epic *Mem-u Zin* was in fact very familiar in the region. For example, Ahmed-i Hani’s version is said to be inspired by another epic, *Meme Alan*, which narrates a similar story; see Baran, *Destana Meme Alan*.

42. Translated by Bruinessen in *Agha, Shaikh and State*, p. 267.

43. Translated by Hassanpour in *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*, p. 53.

44. Martin van Bruinessen is convinced that Ahmed-i Hani’s usage of the term “Kurd” refers only to the tribal Kurds and a part of the urban aristocratic elite. See Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society, Ethnicity, Nationalism and Refugee Problems,” pp. 33–67; see also Bruinessen, “Ehmedi Xani’s *Mem u Zin*.”

45. For a greater treatment of Kurmanc, see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, pp. 120–21.

46. See Bozarşlan, *Mem u Zin*, p. 56; “Bi’fkr ji Ereba heta ve Gurcan / Kurmanciye buye şibhe bircan / Ew Rum u Ecem bî wan hesarî / Kurmanc-i hemî lî çar kenarî.”

47. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 267. The author conducted a field-work in the region in the 1970s. His observations are of great value.

48. Bruinessen estimates that only several hundred manuscripts existed before the printed version of the work, and suggests that the number of people who read the manuscript cannot be more than a few thousand. The work became very popular after the printed version became available in the twentieth century. Bruinessen, “Ehmedi Xani’s *Mem u Zin*,” p. 5.

49. Some scholars claim that this love story represents Kurds’ love for Kurdistan, and hence Mem represents the Kurds and Zin Kurdistan; see Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan*. The same assertion is more forcefully defended by Ayhan, *Kürdistanlı Filozof Ehmede Xani*, esp. pp. 11–130.

50. Some authors also show their doubt about labeling the epic as a nationalist literature. “We do not have conclusive evidence [to state that Hani was a nationalist]. What we have is several lines, which are far from giving us sufficient information.” Bulut, *Ehmede Xane’nin Kaleminden Kürtlerin Bilinmeyen Dünyası*, p. 178.

51. Although there is a possibility that Hani could have read *Şerefname*, we do not have any evidence of it.

52. See Bruinessen and Boeschoten, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir*; Dankoff, *Evliya Celebi in Bitlis*; and Bulut, *Evliya Celebis Reise von Bitlis narch Van*.

53. Martin van Bruinessen and Hendrik Boeschoten remark on Evliya's definition of Kurdistan as the following. "The name [Kurdistan] is sometimes used for designating a definite geographic area, stretching from Erzerum to Basra, and from Aleppo to Ardalan . . . i.e. including even areas where the Kurds are but minority of the population; and sometimes to describe a region as one where, among others, many Kurds live." The editors do not seem to be clear about the criteria that Evliya used to describe Kurdistan. This is a very fair observation; indeed Evliya does not state his criteria of his categorization of a Kurd. Bruinessen and Boeschoten, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir*, p. 253.

54. Topkapı Palace Archive, Evliya Çelebi, "Seyahatname," vol. 4, Bağdat Köşkü, 305, 219a. I am grateful to Robert Dankoff for his assistance. See also Bruinessen "Onyedinci Yüzyılda Kürtler ve Dilleri: Kürt Lehçeleri Üzerine Evliya Çelebi'nin Notları," pp. 13–38.

55. In his tenth volume, Evliya lists the military power of Kurdish tribes under the subtitle of *Devleti Ali Abbasiyanı Ekrad*, tying the origin of the Kurds to the Abbasids. This claim also supports the assertion that Evliya read Şerefhan, who makes the same claim. See *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi: Mısır, Sudan, Habeş, 1672–1680*, 10: 53–54.

56. Topkapı Palace Archive, Evliya Çelebi, "Seyahatname," Bağdat Köşkü 305, vol., 4, 219a.

57. Evliya also comments on the ancient origin of Kurdish and claims that this language comes from the time of the Noah and is distinct from Arabic, Deri, Hebrew, and Farsi. Evliya calls this language "Kürdim." See Topkapı Palace Archive, Evliya Çelebi, "Seyahatname," Bağdad Köşkü, vol., 4, 212b and 218b; also Bruinessen, "Onyedinci Yüzyılda Kürtler ve Dilleri."

58. It is not certain whether Evliya's Zaza are the same group as the people whom we presently called Zaza. However, Evliya's statement that these dialects (*lisan*) were not mutually understandable is reminiscent of similar arguments made to separate Zaza from Kurdish today. For the controversy on the Kurdisness of the Zaza speakers, see White, *Dynamics of the Kurdish and Kirmanc-Zaza Problems in Anatolia*, p. 1.

59. Abdurrahman Bedirhan, "To Sultan Abdulhamid II," *Kürdistan*, 2 April 1899, p. 1, printed in Bozarslan, *Kürdistan*, 1:273.

60. Bozarslan, *Kürdistan*, p. 154.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 146: "devlet-i ebedmüddet-i Osmaniyelerini teşkil eden akvamın en güzidelerinden . . . Osmanlı tabiiyetiyle müftehir bulundukları. . ."

62. Abdurrahman Bedirhan, "Kürtlere" [To the Kurds], *Kürdistan* 27 (13 March 1901): 5. The article is printed in Bozarslan, *Kürdistan*, p. 475.

63. This is not to say, however, that territory is the only indicator of identity. Abdurrahman, for example, separates Armenians, who share the same land with Kurds.

64. I was unable to locate any Ottoman text in the eighteenth century that would give us clues about the usage and criterion of the terms “Kurd” and “Kurdistan.” It is possible that for the term Kurd, the linguistic and geographical criterion were the determinants.

65. Şemseddin Sami (Fraşeri), *Kamus ul Alem*, 5: 3840.

66. Ibid.

67. Şerif Pasha, *Memorandum on the Claims of Kurd People*, presented on 22 March 1919. It was published under the same title (Paris: A. G. L’Hoir, 1919).

68. A letter dated 18 March 1920 by Emin Ali Bedirhan to the president of the Paris Peace Conference, F.O., 371-5068, E. 4396/11/44, p. 210.

69. There are some Kurdish scholars such as Mehmet Emin Zeki, who insist on including Luristan in Kurdistan based on linguistic similarities. See Zeki, *Kürdistan Tarihi*.

70. This is not to say, however, that all inhabitants of Kurdistan were Kurds. Armenians, Nestorians, Turcomans, and Arabs also occupied the same territory as the Kurds. In such cases, religion and language helped to further elaborate the Kurdish identity. Kurds were the speakers of one of the Kurdish dialects and mainly belonged to the Shafi rite of Sunni Islam. Nevertheless, the existence of non-Kurdish groups in the region does not refute the claim that one of the prerequisites of being a Kurd is to have a belief that they came from Kurdistan.

Chapter 3

1. See, for example, Khoury and Kostiner, *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, and Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan*. An earlier version of this chapter was published as “State-Tribe Relations: Kurdish Tribalism in the 16th and 17th Century Ottoman Empire,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1996): 5–22.

2. Richard Tapper’s two articles address these questions persuasively: “Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East,” pp. 48–73; and introduction to *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, pp. 1–75.

3. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*.

4. For a more detailed discussion on the shortcoming of the segmentary lineage theory, see Eickelman, *The Middle East and Central Asia*, pp. 128–134.

5. Hourani, “Conclusion: Tribes and States in Islamic History,” p. 303.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 304. For the role of myth in constructing and reconstructing a society, see Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*, pp. 15–45.

8. Tapper, Introduction to *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, p.9.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid. See also Barth, *Nomads of South Persia*.

11. Manz, *Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, p. 29.

12. Tapper, *The Conflict of Tribe and State*, p. 9.

13. This study uses the term “emirate” in the same sense that Tapper uses “confederacy.” “Kurdish principalities” is another term designating the same political group.

14. Amedroz, “The Marwanid Dynasty at Mayyafariqin in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries A.D.,” *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* (1903) p. 146, and Hillenbrand, “Marwanids.”

15. Arfa, *The Kurds*, p. 9.

16. See Minorsky, “Kurds, Kurdistan.”

17. For a more detailed treatment of the issue of the Kurdish-Aqquyunlu relations, see John Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, pp. 81, 111–12.

18. Minorsky, “Kurds, Kurdistan,” p. 457, based on Şerefhan’s account in *Şerefname*. See also Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 137. In his third chapter Bruinessen tackles the issue of interaction between the Ottoman Empire and Kurdish tribes in an anthropological context. I have greatly benefited from this chapter. Here I intended to address the same issue in a more pronounced historical context by bringing in archival documents. I also examine this interaction in a longer period that includes the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which state-tribe relations became increasingly volatile.

19. For the literature regarding Selim I’s rule, see Uğur, *Reign of Sultan Selim I*; and Hoca Saadeddin, *Tacü’i Tevarih*.

20. Mainly Türkmen (Turcoman) followers of Shah İsmail in Anatolia who were named after the red headgear they wore.

21. Bruinessen, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir*, p. 16.

22. This is Bruinessen’s paraphrase and translation of the section after the *Şerefname* in Charmoy, *Cheref-nameh; ou Fastes de la Nation Kourde*, 2: 296–97.

23. He was the grandfather of Şerefhan Bitlisi, the author of *Şerefname*.

24. Şerefhan, *Şerefname* (trans Bozarlan), pp. 461–513.

25. The information in the next section is based mainly on İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire*; Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. 3; Kunt, *Sultan’s Servants*.

26. Minimizing the effect of Byzantium institutions on the Ottomans, M. Fuat Köprülü contradicts this view. See Köprülü, “Bizans Müesseselerinin Osmanlı

Müesseselerine Te'siri Hakkında Bazı Mülâhazalar,” pp. 165–313, also Köprülü, *Some Observations on the Influence of Byzantine Institutions on Ottoman Institutions*.

27. The *akçe* was a silver coin, weighted approximately 0.7 gram by the middle of the sixteenth century. Both weight and exchange rate of the *akçe* changed over time based on the economic conditions of the empire. An indication of the *akçe*'s purchasing power in early-sixteenth century Anatolia is that one kilogram of barley was six *akçes* and of wheat was eight *akçes*; see Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, pp. 197–98, n. 48.

28. However, the *iltizam* system (tax farming) was exclusively applied in the Arab provinces.

29. İnalcık, *Ottoman Empire*, pp. 104–5.

30. For instance, *Şerefname* indicates that the ruling family of Cezire claimed descent from the Arab general Khalid bin al-Walid (d. 642); the Çemişkezek and Hakkari rulers traced their genealogy back to the Abbasids, see Şerefhan, *Şerefname*, (trans. Bozarslan) pp. p. 135, 188 and 107 respectively.

31. Royal or imperial diplomas, letters, or privileges.

32. Landed estate held in freehold by patent from the crown.

33. The original was published in Sevgen *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri*, document no. 16. According to Sevgen the original is in the Başbakanlık Arşivi, Hatt-ı Hümayun 20898-C. Translation is mine based on Sevgen's modified version of the text, pp. 42–43.

34. Sevgen, *Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Türk Beylikleri*, p. 41.

35. Bruinessen confirms this point by explicitly stating that a strong state bears some responsibility in the creation of several Kurdish tribes, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 134. See also Tapper, introduction, p. 9.

36. Şerefhan, *Şerefname* (trans. Bozarslan), pp. 195–202.

37. Bruinessen claims that the term is not yet found in the sixteenth century *defter*, but has been mentioned in the documents from the mid-seventeenth century on. Bruinessen, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbakir*, p. 21.

38. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 158.

39. The earliest Ottoman document in Nejat Göyünç's article is a *defter*, registered in the Topkapı Palace archives (D. 9772), that dates tentatively back to 1520. This *defter* mentions thirty-seven *sancaks* (*livas*) some of which were Kurdish emirates. Göyünç, “Diyarbakir Beylerbeyliği'nin ilk İdari Taksimati,” 23:23–35. However, Bruinessen cites an earlier document of 1518, which seems to be the earliest Ottoman register, allowing us to theorize about the Kurdish autonomy.

40. Başbakanlık Arşivi, TT 64. Bruinessen refers to this *defter* in *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbakir*, p. 17, in reference to *Diyarbakır İl Yıllığı 1967*. Arkan also mentions this document in his article “Çemişkezek Livası Kanunnamesi” (The Law-book of the Çemişkezek District): 104, n. 22.

41. This happened probably before Pir Hasan's appointment to the Çemişkezek confederacy, see Şerefhan, *Şerefname* (trans. Bozarslan), pp. 188–95.

42. Nontribal Kurds, however, living generally in the urban centers such as Diyarbakır paid their taxes. Until 1540 the Ottoman state used the same tax system as that of Aqqyunlu regulated by Uzun Hasan. For detailed information see Barkan "Osmanlı Devrinde Aqqoyunlu Hükümdarı Uzun Hasan Bey'e Ait Kanunlar," pp. 545–73.

43. İnalçık, *Ottoman Empire*, p. 106.

44. Kunt, *Sultan's Servants*, appendix 1, pp. 102–16; also Tayyib Gökbilgin, introduction to *Kavanin-i Ali Osman*, pp. 3–50. The only difference is that the *defter* 10057 counts eleven minor emirates.

45. According to the Topkapı Palace Archives, D. 10057, the title was *Defter-i Elviye-i Memalik-i Ma'mure-i ala Sebili't-Tafsil*. See Gökbilgin, introduction, p. 6.

46. It seems that information regarding the Kurdish territories in this *defter* (Topkapı Palace Archives, D. 10057), summarized by Gökbilgin (p. 26–27) corroborates another *defter* (Topkapı Palace Archives, D. 5246) published by Kunt, in *Sultan's Servants*, pp. 114–15 and Göyünç, "Diyarbakır," pp. 29–30. According to Göyünç this *defter* (D. 5246) was compiled in 1526.

47. There is an inconsistency in the original manuscript of *Seyahatname*. Evliya states that there were sixteen *sancaks* in Diyarbakır, ". . . ve eyalet-i Diyarbekir cümle onaltı sancaktır." In the next line he refers to the *sancaks* as nineteen "Amma ontokuz sancağın onikisi diğer memleketün eyaletinde olduğu gibi tımar-u zeametlidir," but lists twenty *sancaks*. According to Bruinessen, the reason for this mistake is that Habur and Sincar together formed one *sancak* and were mistakenly listed as two separate *sancaks* in *Seyahatname*. Nineteen was indeed the correct number. See the facsimile of the original manuscript in Bruinessen and Boeschoten, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir*, fol. 199 r. This mistake was not corrected in Zuhuri Danişman's translation either; see *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi*, 6:117. These kinds of errors are not uncommon in *Seyahatname*.

48. Ayn-i Ali's *risale*, compiled in 1609, corroborates with Evliya Çelebi. Apparently, both authors refer to early reign of Süleyman I, but the exact date for Süleyman's above-mentioned *kanunname* is not very clear. See Bruinessen, *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir*, p. 204, n. 19; for a discussion on the historicity of Ayn-i Ali, see Kunt, *Sultan's Servants*, appendix 1, pp. 102–4; also Gökbilgin, introduction to *Kavanin-i Ali Osman der Hulasa-i Mezami-i Defter-i Divan*, pp. 3–50.

49. Bruinessen dates it as 1631 in *Evliya Çelebi in Diyarbekir*, but Rhodes Murphey claims that the work was completed in nine months between September 1632 and June 1633 in his introduction to *Kanun-Name-i Sultan li Aziz Efendi*, p. viii.

50. His actual title is not clear, but based on his ability to produce such a work, Murphey thinks Aziz Efendi was a *divan katibi* or secretary of the High Council. *Ibid.*, p. vii.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 12–18.

52. Evliya Çelebi, as translated in Dankoff, *Evliya Celebi in Bitlis*, p. 63.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 237–75.

54. "Van eyaletinde başka hükümetdir." *Ibid.*, p. 58.

55. B.A., *Mesail-i Mühimme*, 1310.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

58. Devlet Salnamesi, 1284 (1867), p. 93. This *salname* is in the Başbakanlık Arşivi; however, in the University of Chicago microfilm collection, the same *salname* (1284) did not have this crossed out. In this copy Kurdistan simply does not exist. It is possible that the *salname* of 1284 was published twice that year, and the second publication had the corrected version. It is also possible that "Kurdistan Vilayeti" became "Memaretülaziz" after the publication of the first version of the *salname*.

59. The first experiment in administrative structuring took place in one of the Balkan province of the empire in 1864. The former *eyalets* of Silistre, Vidin, Üsküp, and Niş were combined to create the Tuna Vilayeti. From this point on, Ottoman administrative records replaced the term *eyalet* with *vilayet*; see Tosun, *Türkiye'de Valilik Sistemi*, p. 11. For a more complete treatment of the issue, see Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire: 1856–1876*, pp. 136–71.

60. The following year Memaretülaziz was reduced to an *elviye* (subprovince), and Diyarbakır Vilayeti also included Siirt and Mardin. See Devlet Salnamesi 1285 (1868–69): 105.

61. For example, in 1849 the Hakkari *sancak* had İzzet Pasha as its governor with the rank of vizier. The pashas had also their own hierarchy; the vizier was one of the highest ranking among the pashas.

62. Some, such as Bedirhan of the Botan emirate, was promoted to the rank of pasha while serving the Ottoman state outside Kurdistan; see chapter 5. An obvious exception is Cemil Pasha of Diyarbakır, who was the governor of this city. However, he must have been appointed to this post after 1867, when Diyarbakır became a *vilayet*.

63. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 140; on Ottoman intervention of succession see the section on the Hakkari confederacy in *Şerefname*, particularly, pp. 118–24. By utilizing *Şerefname*, Bruinessen demonstrates this point forcefully, *ibid.*, pp. 147–50.

64. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 161.

65. Şerefhan, *Şerefname* (trans. Bozarslan), p. 111.

66. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, pp. 169–70. Zeki Arıkan claims that the *nöker* was a cavalry unit special to eastern Anatolia, pointing out the interchangeable use of the term with that of *sipahi* in the Ottoman documents. Arıkan, "Çemişkezek Livası Kanunnamesi," p. 115, n. 60. Whether the *nöker* were slave-soldiers is not clear in Arıkan's account.

67. Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, p. 161.

68. Evliya Çelebi as quoted in Dankoff, *Evliya Celebi in Bitlis*, p.61, and Şerefhan, *Şerefname* (trans. Bozarslan), p. 493.

69. See Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516-1922*, particularly pp. 61–134.

70. As the Ottoman Empire declined in the following centuries, the iltizam replaced the *dirlık* system. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Kurdistan was full of emirs that were practically, if not theoretically, independent.

71. Students from other parts of the empire were also trained in these schools. However, the majority came from the Kurdish and Arab provinces of the empire. For more information, see Rogan, “Aşiret Mektebi,” pp. 83–107.

Chapter 4

1. I use the term “Kurdism” to mean an intellectual and cultural movement that promotes curiosity about Kurdish language, history, and culture. It does not denote an antithesis to Ottomanism; on the contrary, it is a part of it.

2. Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*, p. 360.

3. Şerefhan, *Şerefname*, (trans. Bozarslan), p.135. For the Yezidi Kurds, see Fuccaro, *The Other Kurds: Yazidis in Colonial Iraq*.

4. Şerefhan, *Şerefname*, (trans. Bozarslan), p. 139. For the family tree, see chapter 5.

5. A controversy exists, however, about the exact year of Bedirhan’s coming to power; some sources suggest that the year was 1821, while others claim that it was 1840–41; see Malmisanij, *Cizira*, p. 276 n. 45 and 46. Based on my research in the primary documents, I believe the era 1835–38 was the period he established himself as the emir of the Botan emirate.

6. Wright and Breath, “Visit of Messrs. Wright and Breath to Bader Khan Bey,” p. 381.

7. In 1838 a German officer, Helmut von Moltke was in Cizre and was reporting to Istanbul. His report dated 15 June 1838, was published in Sevgen, *Doğu*, pp. 62–66.

8. There is no exact date for the revolt, but from 1842 to 1847 Bedirhan was paying only lip service to Istanbul. The Ottoman local administration in the region was very suspicious about the loyalty of Bedirhan and was planning a military operation against him in the 1846. However, we know the exact date of the first military clash between the government forces and Bedirhan: 4 June 1847 (17 Cemaziyelahir 1263).

9. The Tanzimat (Reorganization) Period begins with the declaration *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu* on 3 November 1839. The main aim was to renovate the Ottoman state structure through a series of centralization policies.

10. B.A., İrade, Dahiliye, 1265/10866, is a thank-you letter from the governor of Kurdistan upon his acceptance of the Kurdistan Medal. See also Malmisanij, *Cızira*, p. 68.

11. For example, Malmisanij, a Kurdish researcher, believes that the Bedirhan Revolt was a nationalist movement; see *Cızira*, p. 11; and Zeki, *Kürdistan Tarihi*, p. 124. See also “Bedirhan Bey,” *Kürdistan*, 7 April 1897, p. 1. This was the first Kurdish newspaper, and it was published by the Bedirhani family. In 1991 M. Emin Bozarslan re-published the whole collection with its modern Turkish translation as *Kürdistan*, 2 vols (Uppsala: Deng, 1991).

12. B.A., Mesail-i Mühimme, 1225; this document was reprinted in Sevgen, *Doğu*, appe. doc. no. XXXI. For Sevgen’s transliteration, see pp. 72–73.

13. Sevgen presents several other documents in his chapter on the Bedirhans, Sevgen, *Doğu*, pp. 61–134.

14. Ottoman documents indicating this point are published in *ibid.*, pp. 61–134.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 103, Malmisanij, gives this date as September 19, 1847, Malmisanij, *Cızira*, p. 56.

16. Malmisanij, *Cızira*, p. 58.

17. Technically it meant provincial governor, but in the nineteenth century it became a civil service rank. The holders of this rank were called pasha. For Bedirhan’s promotion to this rank, Sevgen (*Doğu*, p. 115) shows an Ottoman document, B.A., İrade, Dahiliye 1274/2108, dated 17 Zilkade 1274 (1858).

18. An Ottoman document confirms this number and reveals the names of his children; see B.A., İrade, Dahiliye, 1286/41717. The document is a letter written by the children of Bedirhan to Istanbul (Makam-ı Mualla-ı Sadaret-i Uzmaya), requesting an increase in their salaries. In this document the number of family members is indicated as sixty three (“altmış üç neferden ibaret bulunan evlad ve iyal ve ahfadını . . .”).

19. This family is also known as Sadate Nehri or Gilanizade. see Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis, and Heretics*, p. 199.

20. From Consul-General Abbott to Mr. Thomson, 15 July 1880, in *Parliamentary Papers*, (Turkey, 1881), 5: 9.

21. In a personal interview, Melik Fırat, a grandson of the famous Naqshbandi shaykh Said also confirmed that the Şemdinan family owned a considerable land in Kurdistan. Interview, fall 1996, in his residence in Yalova. Muzaffer İlhan Erdost, in his very informative book titled *Şemdinli Röportajı*, p. 230, informs us that the shah of Iran donated some land to Sayyid Taha I, Ubeydullah’s father, as an endowment (*vakıf*) at the Ottoman border. Erdost further claims that the family also owned some land in Medina.

22. We know that under the leadership of Muhammed Sıddık (1883–1910), who was Ubeydullah’s brother, the family accumulated wealth through its investment in tobacco production. The tobacco produced in the Şemdinan region was in high demand in Iran; see Erdost, *Şemdinli Röportajı*, p. 231.

23. For a concise history of Naqshbandi order, see Algar, "A Brief History of the Naqshbandi Order," pp. 3–45. Also see Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics*, pp. 199–200.

24. The handwritten diagram of the family tree of the Şemdinan family was given to me by Hızır Geylan. Since it includes Hızır Geylan's children, it is clearly one of the latest ones among those that earlier scholars utilized.

25. *Parliamentary Papers*, "Correspondence Respecting Kurdish Invasion of Persia," 1881, paper no. C. 2851, vol. C. 361; microfiche no: 87.873–874; the same document was published in *Parliamentary Papers*, (Turkey 1881), 5: 1–82.

26. *Parliamentary Papers*, 5:1–82; see also Jwaideh, "The Kurdish Nationalist Movement," p. 214.

27. The full text of the Treaty of Berlin can be found in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, I*: 189–91.

28. A letter from Vice-Counsel Clayton to Major Trotter, Başkale, 11 July 1880 in *Parliamentary Papers* (Turkey, 1881), 5:7.

29. Jwaideh, "Kurdish National Movement," p. 231.

30. A letter from Clayton to Trotter dated 27 November 1880, *Parliamentary Papers* (Turkey, 1881), 5: 74; also Clayton to Trotter, 2 November 1880. "The Sheikh tried very hard to get the Christian to join him. . . . Some 400 or 500 Nestorians accordingly joined his force. . . ." (p. 54).

31. After his exile to Istanbul, he escaped back to the Hakkari region; however, his freedom was very short-lasting. He was soon captured and returned to Istanbul.

32. Blau, "Le rôle des cheikhs Naqshbandis dans le mouvement national Kurde," pp. 371–79.

33. A letter to Earl Granville from Ronald Thomson, Tehran, 31 October 1881, *Parliamentary Papers* (Turkey 1881), 5: 45.

34. Ubeydullah to Dr. Cochran dated 5 October 1880, *Parliamentary Papers* (Turkey 1881), 5: 47–48. The letter was mentioned in Safrastian, *Kurds and Kurdistan*, pp. 62–63.

35. Jwaideh, "The Kurdish National Movement," pp. 226–33. In fact, using the British reports and memoirs of American missionaries, Jwaideh argues that Ubeydullah wanted an independent Kurdish state. Relying on Jwaideh, Robert Olson places the Ubeydullah Revolt as the first stage in the emergence of Kurdish nationalism; see particularly *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, pp. 1–3. See also a transcript of Sayyid Ubeydullah's sermon to his fellow Naqshbandi *khalifas* and shaykhs, published in Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal Demokratik Mücadeleleri*, pp. 125–126. Bayrak cites a book written by a Russian captain, Avriyanov, as his source but fails to give complete citations.

36. Jwaideh, "The Kurdish National Movement," p. 227.

37. Letter was sent to Mr. Goshan and dated 20 October 1880, in *Parliamentary Papers* (Turkey 1881), 5: 17.

38. The letter was dated 11 July 1880, *ibid.*, p.7.

39. Some researchers suggest that the first Kurdish organization, Kürdistan Azm-i Kavi Cemiyeti, was established in 1900, during the reign of Abdulhamid II. Unfortunately, we do not have any reliable information regarding this organization. Rohat Alakom suggests that this organization was established in Istanbul and was the first Kurdish organization; see Alakom, “1900’lerin Başında Kürt Örgütleri ve Kürt Örgütlenme Tarihi,” p. 18. In my judgment, if such an organization ever existed and functioned, it must have been established in Cairo, not Istanbul. Unfortunately, we have only two references to this organization: one in Zinar Silopi’s memoir *Doza Kürdistan* and the other in a single line in booklet that reads “the revenue generated by this publication belongs to Kürdistan Azm-i Kavi Cemiyeti.” Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan* on the title page. The publication does not have a publication date or place. We are almost certain that this booklet was published in Cairo, not in Istanbul, and possibility remains that Kürdistan Azm-i Kavi Cemiyeti was an informal organization in Cairo, where Abdulhamid II’s censorship was not as strict. From the content of the book one can conclude that the publication date was around 1907.

40. For more information on this rivalry, see the next chapter. Tark Zafer Tunaya, an authority on political organizations in the Ottoman Empire, also mentions the family competition. Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler* (1984), vol. 1.

41. Nesturi or Nestorians were a Christian population living mainly in eastern Anatolia and Iraq who refused to accept the Orthodox Church’s condemnation of Nestorius. Their church is usually referred to as the Assyrian or Nestorian Church.

42. *Kürdistan Terakki ve Teavün Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi*, article 1, “Maksad-ı Tesis.” The document was also published in Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, (1984), pp. 409–13.

43. Tunaya, *ibid.*, pp. 405–9.

44. Tunaya cites *Tanin*, 23 Teşrin-i evvel 1324 (1908), pp. 3–4. The land dispute between Armenian and Kurdish landowners is also reflected in Ottoman documents, particularly in the Meclis-i Vükela, Dahiliye collection of 1909.

45. No sufficient information is available about the accuracy of this number except for the statements by Münip and Mehmet Hamza, representatives of Hakkari. For the full citation of the sources, see Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, (1984), p. 407.

46. “Istanbul’da mukim olmak. . . .” *Kürdistan Terakki ve Teavün Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi*.

47. David McDowell claims, without any reference to his source, that Kurdish population was around thirty thousand in Istanbul. See McDowell, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 93. F.O. 371/4191, 91082 estimates this number as twenty thousand. For a study on the composition of Kurdish community in Istanbul, see Alakom, *Eski Istanbul*.

48. Editorial in *Jin*, 3 Eylül 1335 (1919).
49. It seems that Dersimi is extrapolating this slogan, which was increasingly used in the Republican period.
50. Dersimi, *Hatıratım*, p. 31
51. For a counterargument, see Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.
52. See, for example, a book written by Celadet Bedirhan and Kamuran Bedirhan: *Edirne Sükutunun İcyüzü*. These brothers are known for their leadership in Kurdish nationalism; however, in 1913 clearly they were Ottomanists.
53. The society was also known as Kürt Ligi (Kurdish League), and Kürt Teali Cemiyeti (SAK). Silopi makes a distinction between the two, stating that Kürt Teali Cemiyeti was established independently in Diyarbakır under the leadership of the Cemilpaşazade family and later became a part of Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti of Istanbul; Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 54.
54. Oğuz Aytepe suggests that the SAK was established secretly on 6 November 1917. It is possible that in 1917 the Kurds had been entertaining the idea of establishing a nationalist organization such as the SAK instead of the SMPK, which was more cultural than political in orientation; it is not clear whether or not the SAK was ever a secret or illegal organization. We do know that the SAK registered with the central government and became legal on 17 December 1918; see Aytepe, “Yeni Belgelerin Işığında Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti,” pp. 9–16.
55. Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, pp. 56–57.
56. Tunaya, *Türkiye’de* (1986), 2: 186–87.
57. Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, pp. 39–45.
58. Aytepe, “Yeni Belgelerin Işığında Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti,” pp. 13–15.
59. The regulations of the SAK are published in Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, (1986), 2: 203. Also see the document F.O. 371/4191, 91082 dated 17 June 1919.
60. One can also translate *Kürt kavmi* as “Kurdish nation.” Tunaya, *Türkiye’de*, 2: 208–9.
61. Siverekli Hilmi, “Kürd Gençlerine,” *Jin*, 19 November 1918. 8: 9, reprinted in Bozarıslan, *Jin*, 2: 401.
62. Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 57.
63. Great Britain Foreign Office, [112773/3050/44A], “Letter from Mr. Hohler (Constantinople) to Sir F. Tilley,” 21 July 1919, in British Foreign Office, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, p. 696.
64. See, for example, Memduh Selimbegi “Kürd Klübünde bir Muhasebe,” *Jin*, 1 June 1919, and also *Jin*, 26 May 1919. These articles were reprinted in İsmail Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, pp. 237–89.

65. Memduh Selimbegi, “İki Hayırlı Eser: Kürd Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti- Kürd Talebe Hevi Cemiyeti,” *Jin*, 26 May 1919; Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, document number XI, pp. 272–276. These documents are taken from M. Emin Bozarşlan’s collection of the newspaper *Jin*. Noticeably, one of the purposes of the Society for the Advancement of Kurdish Women was “not to stand against Turk-ness, but perhaps to introduce ourselves [Kurd-ness] to them. “Bizim maksadımız Türklüğe karşı durmak değil, belki ona zahir olmak ve kendimizi tanıtmaktır.”

Chapter 5

1. See chapter 4. For an earlier version of this research see Özoğlu, “Nationalism and Kurdish Notables in the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Era,” pp. 343–409.

2. Unless otherwise indicated, the information presented here was gathered from an interview with Abdulkadir’s grandson, Hızır Geylan, in Istanbul, Suadiye, 19 November 1996.

3. The area was also called “Nehri.”

4. The letter was dated 20 June 1920; F.O. 371/5069.

5. Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt*, p. 188; the name is listed as Şeyh Abdulkadir Efendi. See also Badıllı, *Bedüzzaman Said-i Nursi*. 1: 543.

6. Paul Fesch, *Constantinople: Aux derniers jours d’Abdul-Hamid*, p. 334, indicates that Sayyid Abdulkadir was exiled to Mecca with his family in 1896. The same information is given in Ramsaur, *Young Turks*, p. 33. See also Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt*, p. 216–8.

7. Hızır Geylan, interview.

8. Tunaya, *Türkiyede Siyasi Partiler*, 1: 404, n. 3.

9. *Meclis-i Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi*, 16 March 1910, records that the *ayan* member Abdulkadir was asked to come to Istanbul from Iran. Abdulkadir replies in his telegram that was read in the chamber that he was on his way back to Istanbul, see the session minutes dated 5 April 1910.

10. Hızır Geylan did not give me a specific year for this claim; possibly it was during the early part of the CUP period, when the Hamidiye regiments were revitalized and employed particularly in the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. I have not seen, however, any other supporting evidence for this claim.

11. Türkgeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, p. 195. See also Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, p. 16. Clearly, Abdulkadir was an appointed bureaucrat rather than a politician. Members of the *ayan* were appointed by the government and the sultan.

12. Tunaya, *Türkiyede Siyasal Partiler*, (1986), 2: 264.

13. F.O. 371/5069, E. 6148, no. 725/M.1743/5.

14. Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, p.19; Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 57.
15. Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 57. The Ottoman government was aware of Abdulkadir's relations with the British. A thick file is devoted to Sayyid Abdulkadir and the British; see B.A., Dahiliye Nezareti, Kalem-i Mahsusa (DH-KMS) 4403/28, Recep 1338 (1920).
16. Doc. 160 [E 1776/11/44], 24 February 1920, printed in British Foreign Office, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, part 2, series B, "Turkey, Iran and the Middle East: 1918–1939," pp. 281–82.
17. F.O. 371/5068, registry no. E. 4396/11/44; the report was dated 20 May 1920.
18. Ryan, Doc. 160 [E 1776/11/44], 24 February 1920 in British Foreign Office, *British Documents*.
19. Such as the infamous Major Noel who was also known as the Kurdish Lawrence.
20. F.O. 371/5068; E. 4396/11/44 contains the full text translated from *İkdam*, 27 February 1920. Siyamend Othman claims that the interview was also printed in *Tasvir-i Efkar* and reprinted in *New York Times*, 9 March 1920. See Othman, "Kurdish Nationalism," *Armenian Review* (Spring 1989): 42 no.1, p. 53.
21. F.O. 371/5068; E. 4396/11/44.
22. F.O. 371/5069, E. 6148, No. 725/M.1743/5. The letter from High Commissioner J. H. de Bock to Lord Earl Curzon was dated 20 May 1920.
23. F.O. 371/3346, 23 December 1920.
24. For the full discussion, see *Meclis-i Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi*, session dated 8 March 1920.
25. Melik Fırat, in my interview with him on 26 October 1996, stated that Hızır Geylan, a University of North Carolina-educated engineer and a grandson of Sayyid Abdulkadir, refrains from participating in any Kurdish events. I also observed this during my interview with Hızır Geylan, who seemed cautious in talking about his Kurdish—more importantly, notable—genealogy. Hızır Geylan is married to a Turk and stated in our interview that none of his children speak Kurdish.
26. Anter claims that Bedirhan had twenty seven sons (*Hatıralarım*, 1: 80).
27. Malmisanij, *Cizira*, p. 82.
28. Lütfi, *Emir Bedirhan*, p. 55.
29. Referring to a B.A., Meclis-i Vükela entry dated 15 Mayıs 1327, Tunaya (*Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler*, [1984] 1: 406) points out that Abdürrezzak also wanted to be the ruler of Kurdistan (Kürdistan Beyi).
30. Sevgen, *Doğu*, pp. 119–23.

31. This incident seems to be a result of personal conflict between the mayor and the Bedirhanis. Sevgen, publishing the correspondence regarding the matter in the Ottoman archives, fails to support his claim and states that this conspiracy is beyond the scope of his work; see pp. 124–34.

32. Malmisanij (*Cızıra*, p. 118) seems to subscribe to the claim that Emin Ali was in exile for three years after 1906; this cannot be correct, for he was in Istanbul in 1908 establishing the SMPK.

33. Wadie Jwaideh suggests that the organization was closed by the CUP in 1909. Jwaideh, *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihi Kökenleri ve Gelişimi*, p. 200. This book is the translation of Jwaideh's dissertation *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*. No substantial evidence is available for this claim.

34. A report, dated 20 May 1920, from British High Commissioner R. Bobeck F.O. 371/5068; No. 620/M.1743/5.

35. F.O. 371/5068 E. 6148; No. 725/M.1743/5. A letter from Bobeck to Curzon dated 20 May 1920.

36. The society was announced in *Vakit*, 7 June 1920; for the excerpt, see Malmisanij, *Cızıra*, p. 127. However, since a British report (F.O. 371/5068 E. 6148; No. 725/M.1743/5) mentions the establishment of this new organization on 20 May 1920, we can assume that it was established sometime in May 1920.

37. F.O. 371/5068 E. 6148; No. 725/M.1743/5.

38. Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 28.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

40. Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, p.204.

41. Cf. Jwaideh, *Kürt*, p.214.

42. Malmisanij, *Cızıra*, p. 121.

43. Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar*, 1922–1925, p. 32.

44. This definitely meant that a separate Kurdistan would not be tolerated. However, the National Pact signed on 28 January 1919 by the Istanbul government was not very strict for the Arab lands under the foreign occupation. It stipulated that in those areas the Arabs were free to determine their political future. Although first signed by the Istanbul government, when the Grand National Assembly opened in 1920, the National Pact became the first priority for the Ankara government; see Karabekir, *İstiklal Harbimizin Esasları*, pp. 116–17.

45. Doc. 194 [E. 6215/43/93], 25 May 1921, in British Foreign Office, *British Documents*, 2: 300.

46. The Bedirhanis offered collaboration with Greece, an adversary of Turkey, for mutual action against the Kemalists. However, noticing the contradiction between such an action and the background of the Kurds as a pious Islamic society, Britain

seemed uninterested in such cooperation and no substantial result came out of these meetings. Doc. 189, E 5713/43/93 dated 11 May 1921 in a letter from Sir H. Rumbold to Earl Curzon in British Foreign Office, *British Documents*, p. 298. There exists no document to suggest that Greek-Kurdish alliance was substantiated.

47. Their names are mentioned in a list that Göldaş provides, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, p. 44.

48. Nikitin, “Badrkhani, Thurayya and Djaladat,” p. 871.

49. “Kendisine Rumca dersi verdiğim. . .” Celadet Ali Bedirhan, *Günlük Notlar, 1922–1925*, p. 56.

50. Sevgen, *Doğu*, p. 133.

51. See Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), *Nutuk*, vol. 3, in the section “vesikalar,” nos. 57–64.

52. When exactly Celadet left Turkey is not known.

53. Elphinston, “The Emir Jeladet Aali Bedr Khan,” pp. 91–94.

54. Most notably the Ağrı Dağı Revolt of 1930; see Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, pp. 104–22.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 150

56. She was a daughter of Salih Avni, who was not one of the sons of Bedirhan Pasha; so he must be a nephew of him. Celadet and Ruşen had two children: Cemşit and Sinemhan.

57. For more information see, Malmisanij, *Cızira*, pp. 190–206.

58. Mumcu, *Kürt İslam Ayaklanması, 1919–1925*, p. 190.

59. Anter, *Hatıralarım*, 1: 114–15.

60. The information is from an interview with Rüksan Güneysu, Kızıltoprak-Istanbul, 17 November 1996.

61. Malmisanij, *Cızira*, p. 185.

62. Rüksan Güneysu, interview.

63. When he died, he left three children: Rahime, Aziz and Ahmet.

64. Malmisanij, *Cızira*, p. 179.

65. B.A., Sicill-i Ahval, 4/106

66. *Ibid.*, “Muallim-i mahsusadan Arabi ve Farsı okumuştur.”

67. *Ibid.*

68. Sicill-i Ahval does not mention what eyalet it was. Since Diyarbakır was not an *eyalet* in 1860, the only possibility is that it was the *eyalet* of Kurdistan. Diyarbakır became an *eyalet* again in 1867; see *Devlet Salnamesi*, 1284/93.

69. “yetmiş yedi senesinde bila maaş meclis-i kebir-i eyalet azalığına nakil ile o halde aşair eslahasınca zuhur iden fesadın tahkiki ve Bedirhan Paşa müteallikatının ikağ eyledikleri mezallim ve teadiyatın men’i memuriyeti[ne] . . . tahvil olun[muştur],” Sicill-i Ahval, 4/106. What is referred here should not be confused with the Bedirhan’s revolt of 1847. It was a movement on a much smaller scale that took place in 1878. Two of Bedirhan’s sons, Hüseyin Kenan and Osman, after participating the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877, went to Botan and tried to organize an uprising against the central government. This uprising did not create as much trouble for the Ottoman state as the one in 1847. After mobilizing local military forces, such as that of Cemil Pasha, the Ottomans sent Bahri, a brother of Hüseyin Kenan and Osman, to convince his brothers to surrender and to come back to Istanbul. Upon their return, Hüseyin Kenan and Osman were jailed for a short term and then released on the condition that they would not leave Istanbul; see Malmisanij, *Cizıra*, pp. 147–49.

70. Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, p. 14.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 11. On page 22, however, he claims that he went to an engineering school for a year in Lausanne and to Gand (Ghent?) in Belgium.

72. See B.A., Dahiliye Nezareti, İdari Kısım (ID. DH), 57/126/43, 16 Muharrem 1331 (1912). The document confirms the legal formation of the Hevi. This organization had branches in Europe also.

73. Along with Celadet and Kamuran Bedirhan, Ekrem Cemil was one of the companions of the British major Noel in 1919. Kemalists saw Noel’s mission as anti-revolutionary and suspected that Noel’s travel in Anatolia aimed at forming a Kurdish alliance against the Kemalist movement.

74. Mustafa Kemal, *Nutuk*, vol. 3, Document nos. 57–60.

75. Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 101.

76. One of his daughters, Hayriye, died in Damascus in 1953, before him.

77. Unless otherwise indicated, the information is for this section from the memoirs of Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, and Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*.

78. See Ekrem Cemilpaşa, particularly the section titled “Diyarbakır’da ki Hayatım” (Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*, pp. 27–60).

79. Unless otherwise indicated, the information in this section comes from my interview with Handan Arvas on 16 November 1996, and 29 August 2000 Suadiye, Istanbul, and also a phone interview with Muhlis Arvas in Istanbul on 2 September 2000. During the Republican period, Şefik took the last name Eryuvası by mistake. When asked by government officials what last name he wanted, Şefik whispered “Arvasi” with the local accent, which sounded to the government officer like “Eryuvası.” Thus in Republican records his last name appears as Eryuvası.

80. My informant did not make it clear whether King Faisal was the son of Sharif Husayn of the Hashemite clan or of the Saudi clan. In any case the collective memory of the family traces its origin to the Arabs.

81. Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 57.
82. Uyan, *Menkibelerle İslam Meşhurları Ansiklopedisi*, n. 34, see also Bruinussen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State*, appendices.
83. Handan Arvas, interview, 16 November 1996.
84. Arvasi, *Doğu Anadolu Gerçeği*.
85. B.A., Sicill-i Ahval, 1/632.
86. The Galatasaray Lycee was in Istanbul. The curriculum was in French.
87. Şerif Paşa, *Bir Muhalifin Hatıraları*, p. 9. In B.A., Sicill-i Ahval, Said Pasha is given as the ambassador to Berlin: “Berlin Sefir-i kebiri. . .” This record obviously predates his appointment as the foreign minister.
88. Alakom, “Şerif Paşa’nın,” p. 324. See also his *Şerif Paşa*, pp. 15–16, where he corrects Zinar Silopi’s statement that Şerif did not serve in Berlin as an ambassador.
89. In the 1 March 1336 (1920) session, Tunalı Hilmi, a representative from Bolu, states that “Şerif Pasha was once a chair of the Şura-yı Devlet,” see, *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi*, p. 302. We do not know exactly when he assumed that responsibility and how long he occupied the position.
90. Silopi, *Doza Kürdistan*, p. 58.
91. Members of the Baban dynasty were clearly recorded as such. See Mustafa Zihni in B.A., Sicill-i Ahval, 4/442.
92. This is definitely the understanding of Alakom, *Şerif Paşa*, p. 16.
93. B.A., Sicill-i Ahval, 1/632, “Türkçe ve Fransızca tekellüm ve kitabet ider.”
94. “[Şerif] has not visited his country [Kurdistan] since he was a child, and cannot speak any of their tongue [Kurdish].” F.O. 371/5068, E. 2952, 25 March 1920, no. 3759.
95. B.A., Sicill-i Ahval, 1/632. Records in this document go up to the year 1307 (1889).
96. Şerif Paşa, *Bir Muhalifin Hatıraları*, p. 27.
97. In this respect, there are striking similarities between Şerif Pasha’s Kurdish nationalism and Sharif Hussein’s Arab nationalism. They were both developed as a result of an opposition to the CUP’s policies that diminished their position in the Ottoman state. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*.
98. Tunaya cites a *Tanin* article on 25 Kanun-ı evvel 1334 (25 December 1918). Tunaya, *Türkiyede Siyasi Partiler*, (1989), 3: 567.
99. Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti*, p. 16. Tefvik Pasha was the grand vizier in 1909 for the total of twenty-one days and later on 4 November 1918. His first appointment was probably overlooked, since it lasted a very short time.
100. Şerif Paşa, *Bir Muhalifin Hatıraları*.

101. (Paris: A. G. L. Hoir, 1919).
102. Şerif Pasha and Bogos Nubar issued a joint declaration on the same day; see F.O. 371/4193, dated 28 November 1919.
103. For the complete list of Kurds who sent telegrams to Paris see F.O. 371/5068 E. 2127. Also the Ottoman *Meclis-i Mebusan* received a number of telegrams from the Kurds in Kurdistan indicating that they did not recognize Şerif as their representatives and they did not wish to break away from the Ottoman Empire. For these discussions, see *Meclis-i Mebusan*, 1, no. 17 (1 March 1336 [1920]), also published in *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi*, (Ankara: TBMM Basımevi, 1992), 1: 300–2.
104. For further discussion and primary documents on Şerif Pasha's activities in the Paris Peace Talks after 1918, see Kutlay, *İttihat Teraki ve Kürtler*, and Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri*.
105. F.O. 371/5068
106. “[Turks were successful in] detaching Sherif Pasha from the Kurdish cause.” Richard Webb to Earl Curzon, 3 May 1920, F.O. 371/5068, E. 5063
107. Mevlanzade Rıfat in his memoirs refers to Şerif Pasha's wife as “princess.” Mevlanzade Rıfat, *Mevlanzade Rıfat'ın Anıları*, p. 70. Rıza Nur in his memoir confirms that Şerif's wife was an Egyptian princess; see Nur, *Cemiyet-i Hafîye*, p. 95.
108. Nur, *Cemiyet-i Hafîye*, p. 224. She was accused of disseminating forbidden publication in Istanbul and contacting opponents of the CUP in Istanbul on her husband's behalf.
109. Alakom does not elaborate on the nationality of Şerif Pasha's second wife and cites the letter of the granddaughter of Şerif, Antonietta Kerimee, dated November 1997, as his reference. See Alakom, “Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti,” pp. 170–71.
110. Şerif Paşa, *Bir Muhalifin Hatıraları*, p. 14.
111. Alakom, “Şerif Paşa'nın Ölüm Tarihi,” p. 328.
112. According to Badıllı, Nursi was born in 1877. Badıllı, *Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursi*, p. 58.
113. Mardin, *Religion and Social Chance*, p. 65. In this account Mardin relies on Şahiner, who points out his father's and great grandfather's name “Mirza” (prince, son of a lord) as an indicator of nobility. See also Badıllı, *Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursi*, pp. 28–33.
114. “Bir buçuk senedir burda Kürdistan'ın neşr-i maarif için çalışıyorum, ben ki bir hamalın oğluyum. . . .” Nursi, *İçtimai Reçeteler*, p. 52.
115. Nursi's account of his father definitely portrays him as a poor villager, (see Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, p. 45); but this does not refute the claim that he was of a noble origin and from time to time he utilized his noble origin traced back to Muhammad. For a discussion on Nursi's possible notable genealogy, see Badıllı, *Bediüzzaman Said-i Nursi*, pp. 36–37.

116. Document published in Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, p. 162.

117. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 28.

118. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 114. Also see *Yeni Türk Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. “Said-i Nursi;” Kutay, *Çağımızda Bir Asr-ı Saadet Müslümanı*, pp. 82–84.

119. Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, p. 58–60. Şahiner replaced the word “Kürdistan” with “Doğu Anadolu” (Eastern Anatolia).

120. Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasi Partiler*, vol. 2 (1986), p. 215.

121. Tunaya relies on an interview with another member of the SAK, Şükrü Baban.

122. For further information, see Malmisanij, *Said-i Nursi ve Kürt Sorunu*, pp. 29–30.

123. Said Nursi calls Abduh and Afghani *seleflerim* (my predecessors); Said-i Nursi, *İçtimai Reçeteler*, p. 48.

124. One of the best accounts of Nursi in English is Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey*. In Turkish, books were written in great quantity; see particularly Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*; the Risale-i Nur collection consists of 130 books including Nursi’s memoirs and teaching authored by himself over his lifetime. This collection provides us with a very authoritative account of his life.

125. There are several accounts of Fevzi’s year of birth. Naci Kutlay, based on an interview with Fevzi’s nephew, estimates it at around 1883 or 1884, Kutlay, *İttihat Terakki ve Kürtler*, p. 289; yet according to court records of his trial in 1925, Fevzi was born in 1307 miladi (1891–1892); Malmisanij, *Bitlisli Kemal Fevzi*, p. 11.

126. Kurdiye Bitlisi, “Kürdistan’da ki Şehirler Senekesi Türk müdür?” *Jin*, 13 December 1918, p. 3, quoted in Bozarslan, *Jin*, p. 338.

127. Malmisanij, *Bitlisli Kemal Fevzi*, p. 20. The same book has a list of all of Kemal Fevzi’s publications as well.

128. For the full text, see *Devlet-i Aliye ile Sulh Şara’iti*, p. 20.

129. Kemal Fevzi, “Kürdistan Özerkliği,” *Jin*, 21 June 1920, p. 1, quoted in Malmisanij, *Bitlisli Kemal Fevzi*, pp. 95–97. Since the original *Jin* ended after the twenty-fifth issue, the thirty-sixth issue must have been published by the secessionist group of the SAK. This indicates that Kemal Fevzi remained in the secessionist camp.

130. See Olson, *Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, p. 26–52.

131. There have been controversial accounts of Kemal Fevzi’s active participation in the Shaykh Said Revolt. Malmisanij devotes a chapter to the revolt and Kemal Fevzi. It is based on the several newspaper articles published in *Vakit*, April–June 1925, pp. 51–87. The best sources for the court records are indeed the newspaper articles,

particularly those from *Vakit*. These articles were also published in Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal Demokratik Mücadeleleri*.

132. Here I use the verb “emerge” advisedly since, depending on the definition of nationalism, one can argue that Kurdish nationalism existed long before. However, I have argued elsewhere that Kurdish nationalism as a political movement did not exist prior to the Great War. A similar argument is made by Abbas Vali for Kurdish national identity in Iran (“The Making of Kurdish Identity in Iran,” p. 2).

133. This is the date on which the SAK was officially established and recognized by the Ottoman government.

134. There were other active members in this group such as some members of the Baban family and also Mevlanzade Rifat and Kemal Fevzi.

135. This is not to suggest that tribal leaders completely lost charisma among their fellow tribesmen.

Chapter 6

1. Hence, “Kurdish nationalism remained Kurdistan-less (*Kürt milliyetçiliği Kürdistanlı kaldı*).” This phrase was coined by a respected Kurdish scholar, Mehmet Emin Bozarslan, in his introduction to *Jin*.

2. Of course the abolition of the office of caliphate in 1924 was a major blow to the political loyalty of Naqshbandi Kurds to the new Turkish state. However, after the 1925 Shaykh Said Revolt, religious opposition to the new regime was effectively and harshly silenced.

3. A letter by Kazım Karabekir to the Ministry of War dated 6 January 1920 (6 Kanun-ı sani 1336), published in Gökbilgin, *Milli Mücadele Başlarken*, 2: 319.

4. See articles 1 and 6, published in Goloğlu, *Milli Mücadele Tarihi*, pp. 201–3. The congress published its decisions under ten articles.

5. The session was held on 23 October 1919, see İğdemir, *Heyeti Temsiliye Tutanakları*, p. 97.

6. Mustafa Kemal asks, “For example, if a territory extending to the shores of Lake Van is given to the Armenians, why would it create Kurdish nationalism (Mesela Van gölüne kadar Ermenilere verilirse neden Kürtlük çıksın)?” Rauf Bey replies, “It will be an issue of existence, [the Kurds] will all unite. I see a great danger” (Bir mevcudiyet meselesi olacak, hepsi birleşecek. Ben büyük tehlike görüyorum). Mustafa Kemal: “I do not understand, in that region it is possible (?)” (Ben anlamıyorum, o mıntıkada olur.) Rauf: “The other Kurds will have the same opinion. If part of [the Kurds] are given up, the other will decide to follow. They’ll all march” (Diğer Kürtlerde aynı fikirde olacak. Bir kısmı terkedilirse diğerleri aynı şeye karar verir. Hepsi yürürler). Mustafa Kemal: “This is only a theory” (Nazaridir). See İğdemir, *Heyeti Temsiliye Tutanakları*, pp. 97–98.

7. See Dersimi, *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*.

8. After the suppression of the Shaykh Said Revolt, there emerged several smaller-scale and short-lived uprisings in the region. According to Turkish military records, the Turkish army had several military expeditions against the Kurds. These uprisings were the following: the First Ağrı Movement (16 May–17 June 1926), the Koçuşağı uprising (7 September–30 September 1926), the Mutki uprising (26 May–25 August 1927), the Second Ağrı movement (13–20 September 1927), the Bicar movement (7 October–November 1927), the Asi Resul uprising (22 May–3 August 1929). See, *Genelkurmay Belgelerinde Kürt İsyamları* vol. 1.

9. For more information, see Dersimi, , *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*. Dersimi had firsthand experience of these movements.

10. Interview with Medet Serhat, a Kurdish lawyer, intellectual, and eyewitness of the period, on 14 June 1992, Suadiye Istanbul. Serhat was assassinated in 1994. Serhat also told me that in the 1970s and the 1980s it became apparent to many Kurds that the Kurdish problem was an ethnic problem and not a part of a class conflict.

11. Personal communication with Rashid Khalidi on 25 January 1999, Chicago. See also his *Palestinian Identity*, chaps. 4 and 7.

Bibliography

Sources on the Kurds are very scattered and hard to obtain. Although secondary literature on the Kurds is growing, it still is a major task to locate, gather, and evaluate the primary sources on the subject. The primary sources collected and used in book can be divided into four main categories: (1) archival documents; (2) memoirs of Kurdish leaders; (3) interviews with Kurdish family members; (4) other primary sources.

Archival Documents

The majority of the archival documents used in this study come from the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (B.A.) in Istanbul. Documents concerning the Kurds are scattered among different collections. In this study, I have primarily used the following collections: the İrade Dahiliye collections, which include communications between the provincial and central governments. Here, I found many references to Kurdistan, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century. Devlet Salnames (*Salname-yi Devlet-i Aliye-yi Osmaniye*), or the year-books of the state, provide information concerning Kurdistan as an administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire. Names of the governors who served in Kurdistan and of other public servants can also be obtained in the Devlet Salnames. I have used those *salnames* dating from 1848 to 1867, when Kurdistan was granted *eyalet* status.

Another significant collection is the Mesail-i Mühimme, which is concerned with significant events in the Ottoman Empire. There exists a rich collection of documents in this collection. The second volume of the catalog includes a section titled “Kürdistan Meselesi,” (The Issue of Kurdistan). Documents numbered 1224 onward in this volume deal specifically with Kurds and Kurdistan. An important document indicating the formation of the Kurdistan province is found in this collection (Doc. 1310).

The Sicill-i Ahval collection, albeit incomplete, has proven very useful for the purpose of this study. I have gathered some of the prosopographical

information from this collection, which contains the personnel records of Ottoman civil servants. I have used this collection to determine information regarding the birthplaces, education, family, and appointments of Kurdish notables who were also Ottoman civil servants.

Some of the other collections containing information on the Kurds are Meclis-i Vükela (M.V.), Dahiliye Nezareti Siyasi Evrak (Dh.Sys.), Dahiliye Nazareti İdare (Dh. İd.), Dahiliye Nazareti Kalemi Mahsusa (Dh. Kms), and Hariciye Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi (Hr. Mkt.), which deal primarily with the condition of religious minorities in Kurdistan. I was not able to see and inspect every entry in these collections that dealt with the Kurds; however, from the collection catalogs, one can still obtain a degree of understanding about the nature of documents.

I have also used published and unpublished British archival documents and reports. Among these, the collection called *Parliamentary Papers: Turkey* contains extensive information, particularly about the period around the turn of the twentieth century; I used the years 1880 and 1881. The reports to London from the India and the Middle East Offices give vivid descriptions of the area as well as the relationship between the Kurdish notables and the British government. I have also obtained several significant records directly from the British archives, whose collections on the Kurds are rich. Nevertheless, some of the documents that exist in the catalogues could not be found in the archives, for some sections of the archives, so it was indicated, burned during World War II during the blitz of London.

During my research, I also examined several other dossiers from the British archives; the most useful ones for this study came particularly from the Foreign Office (F.O.) 371/5068, 5069, 3346, and 6346. These folders contained maps and letters by the Kurdish leaders, which allowed me to look more into the mind-set of the Kurdish nationalist leadership. Needless to say, the British archives are one of the fruitful sources on the Kurds, for the British very closely monitored (and occasionally intervened in) the Kurdish affairs in the period under review. Therefore, many studies on the Kurds have made use of British sources. In my study, I tried to avoid relying solely on the British sources where possible. Nevertheless, I benefited greatly from the published and unpublished documents in the British archives.

Memoirs

Memoirs constituted another major primary source for my research. A limited number of Kurdish intellectuals of the era under examination left memoirs that shed light on Kurdish nationalism. The most important memoirs for my study include the following: Zinar Silopi (Kadri Cemilpaşa), *Doza Kürdis-*

tan; Nuri Dersimi, *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim and Hatıralarım*; Ekrem Cemilpaşa, *Muhtasar Hayatım*; İhsan Nuri Paşa, *Ağrı Dağı İsyanı*; Mevlanzade Rıfat, *Mevlanzade Rıfat'ın Anıları*; Şerif Paşa, *Bir Muhalifin Hatıraları*; Said-i Nursi, *İçtimai Reçeteler*. The authors were Kurdish leaders of the era under examination and some of them joined the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (SAK); hence, their memoirs contain very valuable information that was utilized in this study. Most of these memoirs contain biographical information about the Kurdish nationalists and their intellectual/political orientations. In the last two decades, these books have been republished in modern Turkish. Unfortunately, some of the most significant leaders of this era, such as Sayyid Abdulkadir, who was the president of the SAK, left no written document in the genre of memoir or otherwise. The absence of Sayyid Abdulkadir's memoir has deprived researchers of the opportunity to draw a more vivid picture of the intellectual milieu of the period, for he was the member of the Ottoman senate (Ayan Meclisi) and as well as the president of the SAK. However, I was able to follow him through newspaper articles, British reports and his speeches in the Ottoman *Ayan Council*.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's *Nutuk* is another primary source, for some sections of these speeches make references to the Kurds in the era under review. In its third volume, several documents are published that give us clues about Mustafa Kemal's views on certain Kurdish leaders. The best source to follow the debates on the Kurds among Turkish/Kemalist groups is the memoir of Kazım Karabekir. He was also one of the best sources on the Turkish War of Independence. Before and during the War of Independence, Karabekir was stationed in Erzurum as the commander of the Ottoman fifteenth Army Corps and was one of the most knowledgeable highranking Turkish officers who dealt with Kurdish affairs. He was the author of several books, but particularly important is *İstiklal Harbimiz*, which contains very valuable documents and observations of Karabekir. Through these texts, we can also follow the Kemalist attitude towards the growing Kurdish nationalism.

Interviews

I used interviews mainly to collect biographical information; however, the interviews yielded more information than I had anticipated. The hardest task was to find the surviving members of the families and to convince them to talk with me. After I was able to get in touch with them, and they were convinced that my questions were not political in nature but geared towards an academic study, they welcomed my questions and me wholeheartedly.

I first talked to Melik Fırat, a grandson of the Kurdish leader Şeyh (Shaikh) Said, on whose revolt in 1925 substantial literature has been produced.

My research excluded this family, and I pursued this contact mainly to extract information about other families. I learned from Melik Fırat that a grandson of the SAK president Sayyid Abdulkadir, Hızır Geylan, lived in Istanbul. Although Abdulkadir's name has been mentioned very frequently in the Ottoman documents, oddly, I did not find any entry in the Sicill-i Ahval collection about him. None of the entries matched with his father's name or his birthplace. He might have been listed under a different name; however, none of my sources indicated that this was the case. In the present scholarship, not much has been said about Abdulkadir's family life. Therefore, my interview with Hızır Geylan provided me with an opportunity to gather information about a personality significant not only as a Kurdish intellectual, but also as an Ottoman statesman. At the end of the interview, Geylan presented and kindly permitted me to copy a handwritten copy of the family tree of his family that demonstrated the kinship relations in detail.

My interview with Rüksan Güneysu, a granddaughter of Bedirhan Paşa, a very significant figure in Kurdish nationalism, was also highly beneficial, for I gathered information about the family life of several members of the Bedirhan family. Güneysu was most helpful in turning my attention to a book by Malmısanij, *Cızıra Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhan Ailesi Derneğinin Tutanaqları*. This book contains very valuable information about the members of the family and has several family trees. I have confirmed the reliability of the presented data with Güneysu.

Another interview was with a granddaughter of a significant Kurdish personality, Shayk Şefik Arvasi. My informant, Handan Arvas, provided me with information that enabled me to learn more about the family and professional life of Şeyh Şefik, who was a cofounder of the SAK. Equally beneficial was the information that Handan Arvas provided on the interfamilial relationships among Kurdish intellectuals and their offspring in Istanbul. I also had the chance to interview Muhlis Arvas, one of the grandsons of Şefik's brother.

I also had the chance to interview and learn from the late Medet Serhat, who was one of the respected figures in the Kurdish intellectual community in Turkey. His knowledge and willingness to share it with me allowed me to better understand the Kurdish nationalist rhetoric in the Republican period. Although much of the information I gathered from him has remained outside the boundaries of this research, it allowed me to focus my attention on many points of which I had been unaware.

Other Sources

One of the most useful sources that was used in this study is the collection of Kurdish newspapers published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries. The first Kurdish newspaper, *Kürdistan* (1898–1902), published by the Bedirhani family, is a very significant source in determining the perception of Kurdish identity at the turn of the century. This newspaper, however, is limited in that only one family, the Bedirhanis, was involved in the publication and editorial process. Hence, one cannot claim that *Kürdistan* represents the view of the Kurdish population at large. Nevertheless, as the first newspaper published in Kurdish and Turkish, it reveals clues about the political and social environment of its era.

Another newspaper, *Jin*, was first published in 1918, and served as an unofficial newspaper of the SAK. Published in Kurdish and Turkish, the newspaper represented a broad spectrum of Kurdish rhetoric. Articles in the newspaper provide the researcher with a rich primary source regarding the Kurdish population and their intellectual, social, political, and economic position in the Ottoman Empire.

The newspapers *Kürdistan* and *Jin* were collected, transliterated, and translated into modern Turkish by Mehmet Emin Bozarlan, a Kurdish scholar. Although his introduction and conclusions represent the scholar's own opinion, the newspaper collections are as valuable as they are unexplored for scholars specializing in the modern Middle East. These collections are also utilized in this study as primary sources.

Ottoman newspapers of the era, such as *Vakit* and *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, also contained useful articles representing the view of the Ottoman (and later Turkish) official view of Kurdish activities. I examined selected issues of these papers; however, systematic review of the Ottoman press of this period will have to await future research.

Concerning the late Ottoman period, I also made use of some other published primary sources, such as Mehmet Bayrak's *Açık-Gizli, Resmi-Gayrresmi Kürdoloji Belgeleri* and *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri*. These books contain a number of primary documents, such as the political programs of Kurdish organizations with lists of their members. These kinds of sources not only offer information about the political life of the Kurdish intellectuals as nationalist leaders, but also provide very detailed footnotes that allow researchers to locate other primary sources.

In addition, the minutes of the Ottoman Ayan Meclisi (Upper House) *Meclisi Ayan Zabıt Ceridesi*, and the minutes of Meclisi Mebusan (the Lower House), the *Meclisi Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi*, contain very valuable information. In these collections, we can follow the parliamentary debates related to the Kurds and the views of parliamentarians of Kurdish origin on Kurdish issues. I made use of these collections, particularly for the years 1919 and 1920.

For the earlier periods, unfortunately, we have very limited material that deals directly with the Kurds. We have Arab, Turkish, and Persian texts that mention Kurds and allow us to construct a view of the Kurds until the sixteenth

century. Arabic sources are usually books of geography defining the location of the Kurds and listing Kurdish tribes. The notable ones are Ahmed ibn Abu Yakub (ninth century), *Kitabo'l Buldan*; Masudi (tenth century), *Muruj al Dahhab*. A very significant Persian source regarding the Kurds is the *Shahnama* by Ferdowsi, who, in his epic, mentions the Kurds several times and tells a story about the origin of the Kurds. In his *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, Hamd Allah Mustawfi informs us of the administrative structure of Kurdistan as an administrative unit in the Seljuk empire.

Kurds are periodically mentioned in the Ottoman sources, but none of the descriptions are equal to that of Evliya Çelebi, a seventeenth century Turkish traveler. In his *Seyahatname*, Evliya confidently specifies the boundaries of Kurdistan and vividly describes the Kurdish territories and lists Kurdish dialects. Although the accuracy of Evliya's accounts may be questioned, this Ottoman source is noteworthy in that it unquestionably demonstrates that the terms "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" were in circulation and readily used in the seventeenth century Ottoman Empire.

Şemseddin Sami (Fraşeri), a nineteenth century Ottoman lexicographer, is another Ottoman writer who defines Kurdistan very vividly. In his *Kamus al Alem* (Encyclopedia of the World), Şemseddin Sami discusses not only the geography of Kurdistan, but also the subgroups of the Kurds. He was a linguist and is known for his attempts to purify the Turkish (Ottoman) language; his political views and professional career justifiably qualify him as a proponent of Turkism. Therefore, it is very illustrative to encounter an entry on Kurdistan in his encyclopedia, for it clearly indicates that the term "Kurdistan" was a valid one within Turkism in the late Ottoman period. I utilized this source to indicate the soft meaning of Kurdistan in the Ottoman sources by comparing it to that in Evliya Çelebi.

When examining the development of Kurdish identity, one can be frustrated of the lack of Kurdish sources that can provide researchers with clues about how the Kurds viewed themselves. There are very few sources available to study and understand how the Kurds viewed themselves. Only two texts allow us to analyze the meaning of the term "Kurd" and the boundaries of Kurdistan prior to the nineteenth century. The one of first comprehensive indigenous source that uses the term "Kurd" in reference to a transtribal group comes from the sixteenth century and is titled *Şerefname*. Written in Persian by şerefhan, the ruler of the Bitlis Emirate, *Şerefname* narrates the dynastic history of what Şerefhan regards as Kurdish families.

The second source comes for the seventeenth century and written in Kurmanci, a dialect of Kurdish. Ahmed-i Hani, the author of this text, *Mem u Zin*, tells a popular story about Mem and Zin. Different versions of *Mem u Zin* were in circulation under the title of *Meme Alan*; however, Hani's version of the epic contains an extra section that deals with Kurds and Kurdistan. It is in this sec-

tion that one may extract information about the Kurds and Hani's perception of Kurdistan.

There is a considerable gap in our knowledge of the Kurds at the present; and this gap widens as we attempt to travel back in history. We have, for example, Şerefhan and Ahmed-i Hani, who belonged to intellectual elites of their eras; however, we know almost nothing of the daily lives of nonelite Kurds and their mind-set. We do not know, for example, to what degree these groups whom we regard as Kurds today subscribed the ideas illustrated in the works of Hani and Şerefhan. What we do know, however, is that until very recently, the term "Kurd" as a common denominator did not mean much to the fragmented Kurdish groups. Even in the late nineteenth century, travelers observed that a great majority of these groups identified themselves with the tribes to which they belonged or the region in which they lived. It must be remembered that it is we who undertake the burden of conceptualizing, and categorizing human groups retrospectively. Our conclusions today cannot, and should, not be reflected back on earlier periods as the norm.

Secondary Sources

Literature on the Kurds, particularly in Western languages, is expanding rapidly as the Kurdish issue internationalizes itself. Books in Middle Eastern languages, notably in Turkish, are also multiplying. There are many Kurdish publishing houses in Scandinavian countries (especially in Norway), Turkey, and Germany that are publishing books in Kurdish dialects as well as in Turkish. I included some of the noteworthy ones in the bibliography. Here I will only discuss a sample of works that are available to English-speaking readers.

One of the most informative works on the Kurds and Kurdistan, though somewhat outdated, is the collection of articles in the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. Written by Thomas Bois, Vladimir Minorsky, and D. N. McKenzie, these articles give the reader an understanding of the history, culture, language, and literature of the Kurds. However, in my judgment, the entry on the Kurds is of most importance due to its very extensive and careful references to primary sources. References to secondary sources, although useful, halt in the 1970s, after which scores of monographs and articles were written.

Among other secondary sources, Martin van Bruinessen's *Agha, Shaikh, and State* deserves special mention because of its reliability and quality of scholarship. It deals with similar issues to the subject of this study, albeit for a later period. Based upon Bruinessen's fieldwork as an anthropologist in the 1970s, the book still remains one of the most authoritative works on the Kurds. Bruinessen's keen observations and commanding analysis of the tribal and religious structure of Kurds makes the book one of the widely referred to sources

on the Kurds, not only in the field of anthropology but also in history as well. I made use of this study particularly because of its treatment of the interplay between the state and Kurdish tribes.

Another widely read book on the Kurds is Robert Olson's *Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion*. This study is based exclusively upon British archives and is therefore limited. Intending to place the Shaykh Said Rebellion of 1925 in the larger context of Kurdish nationalism, Olson skillfully discusses the revolt and its significance for Turkey and the Kurds. However, Olson's argument on the origin of Kurdish nationalism needs revision in light of available data. Despite the fact that they lack the depth of analysis of Olson and Bruinessen, there are other informative studies on the Kurds, such as David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, which brings together a large collection of references, primarily to Western sources; K. Kirişçi and G. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict*; and Lale Yalcin-Heckmann *Tribe and Kinship among the Kurds*. None of these works directly deal with the composition of early Kurdish leadership, an era the present work has tried to explore.

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